

HUNTING  
IN  
MANY COUNTRIES

CHARLES RICHARDSON  
(“Shotley”)



JOHN A. SEAVERNS

TUFTS UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 9090 014 537 076

Webster Family Library of Veterinary Medicine  
Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at  
Tufts University  
200 Westboro Road  
North Grafton, MA 01536





HUNTING IN MANY  
COUNTRIES.



# HUNTING IN MANY COUNTRIES.

---

BY

CHARLES RICHARDSON,

*Author of The English Turf, The Complete Foxhunter, The New Book  
of the Horse, &c.*

---

LONDON :  
THE FIELD PRESS LTD.,  
Windsor House, Bream's Buildings, E.C.4.

Seaverms

SK

285

P53

1922

### DEDICATION.

To John C. Straker, Master of the Tynedale since 1883; John E. Rogerson, Master of the North Durham since 1888; and Lewis Priestman, Master of the Braes of Derwent since 1890, who between them have held the Masterships of three adjoining Countries for a period of just over a century, and with whose hounds the author has seen much good sport.



## PREFACE.

---

IN the following pages the author has attempted a double task: he has gathered from the experience of many years recollections of runs with packs of hounds whose names are familiar to all, and he has complied with the wishes of friends in the North of England and elsewhere in giving particulars of certain packs which have hitherto been neglected by fox-hunting historians. He has not aimed in all these cases at giving the details which should be presented in every complete history of a hunt, but has relied rather on his own personal knowledge of countries with which he can claim to be fairly well acquainted.

Some of the runs belong to recent days, others to hunting history. Three great runs, which may rightly be called historical, took place more than fifty years ago, and the author's descriptions of them have since been confirmed and corroborated in the *Field* by others who had been present.

*East Molesey,*

*September, 1922.*

# CONTENTS.

---

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I. THE NORTH DURHAM COUNTRY    ...    ...    ...	1
II. THE BRAES OF DERWENT COUNTRY    ...    ...	47
III. THE HAYDON COUNTRY    ...    ...    ...	119
IV. THE TYNEDALE COUNTRY    ...    ...    ...	127
V. THE MORPETH COUNTRY    ...    ...    ...	163
VI. ZETLAND HUNT    ...    ...    ...    ...	170
VII. SOME YORKSHIRE AND WESTERN MIDLAND HUNTS	177
VIII. LONG POINTS AND THE HEYTHROP    ...    ...	196
IX. THE CONDITIONS OF HUNTING    ...    ...    ...	226
X. WAR TIME AND AFTER    ...    ...    ...	246



# HUNTING IN MANY COUNTRIES.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### THE NORTH DURHAM COUNTRY.

THERE ARE TWO HUNTS in the north of England which, owing probably in some degree to their remoteness, and perhaps in a larger degree to their insignificance, have up to the present received comparatively no treatment at the hands of the hunting historian. Probably some of my readers will pull up short at the word "insignificance," and therefore I must explain that I only use the word in a comparative sense, for the two hunts—the Braes of Derwent and the North Durham—are not in the least insignificant as regards the sport they show, the attention they attract, the fields they draw, and so forth; but being small countries, and two days a week establishments, they are not exactly on a plane with their neighbours—the Tynedale on the north and the Zetland to the south.

The only history of these two packs that I have seen was a short condensed account which appeared in a work called the *Foxhounds of Great Britain and Ireland*, published in 1906, and which gave no more than a bare statement of facts. Very little space for each pack was allowed, and the details given therein can be considerably added to, though I must at the outset admit that certain information which I have tried to obtain has been of so vague a character that little reliance can be placed in it. At the same time I may state that I have known both countries for a great number of years, and have never really lost touch with sport they have had, while I have collected a certain amount of notes which I can use. But I must make it clearly understood that I am not going to adhere closely to chronological order, that certain periods

of the life of these hunts must be briefly dismissed for want of information, and that most will be made of the facts which have actually come under my personal observation. In fact I am not going to attempt a history, but rather to describe the style of hunting which obtains in these two hunts, and afterwards to continue with personal experiences of some other countries.

And first I must say something about the two particular countries for the benefit of those who are strangers to the district, and many of whom are under the impression that in the north all the hunting takes place among the collieries, and that foxes when dug out are black from coal dust. There are, as a matter of fact, collieries within the confines of these two hunts, a good number in the North Durham and a few in the Braes of Derwent; but collieries do not interfere with hunting anything like so much as might be thought by those who have not hunted in their vicinity, and there are many Midland hunts which have a colliery district, and do not find that their sport suffers therefrom. In the county of Durham, and also in Northumberland, the coalfield lies near the sea, and the further west one goes in either county the further one gets away from the coal district. In South Northumberland the coalfield extends some fifteen miles from the coast, going inland, and a few miles further in parts of Durham. Each of the two hunts which have been named has a colliery district on its eastern side, and to the west is open country, which is not only free from collieries, but so wild and thinly populated as to form a very fine hunting area. The trouble is that in either hunt the wild country is not very large, and in the Durham hunt it has contracted very greatly since I first began to hunt. In the sixties of last century there was not, for example, any colliery in the Lanchester Valley, while mining operations were just being commenced in the Dearness Valley, which is separated from the Lanchester Valley by a formidable line of hills. The collieries between Brancepeth and Durham were also non-existent in those days, while the coal mines in the Burnhope and Holmside district were probably not a tenth part of their present size. But west of the road from Lanchester to Tow

Law there never have been any collieries, and here the country remains just as it was half a century ago, with hardly a new cottage, and no increase of population whatever. Indeed, the country has only one very small village and two tiny hamlets in its area, and yet it extends seven miles from Lanchester to the moors, and seven miles, measuring crossways, from Rowley station to Tow Law. There is only one church (Satley, the village which has been mentioned) and scattered farmhouses, and as long as foxes keep within the boundaries of the district they can hardly be headed, for the land is all grass, and one can at times cross it from Rowley to Tow Law without seeing a soul in the fields in winter months.

Most of this country is a high-lying plain, with little valleys here and there, and less than a mile west of Lanchester you are on the high ground, and the folds of the hills are insignificant, which means that as a rule the galloping is sound, with not too many steep hills to climb. The coverts, too, are small and scattered, and for the most part easily drawn. There were no big woods until Lord Bute's—so generally called, but now the property of the successors of Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart—are reached, and these lie close to Rowley station at the extreme north-western corner of the hunt. (During the War a great portion of these plantations were cut down.) Going westward from Lanchester the first covert reached is Humber Hill, a gorse—or whin, as it is called in the north—of about ten acres, situated on an open hillside. Here foxes are always bred, and here they are always found all through the season, and a find here is, as a rule, a pretty sight, for the fox is generally viewed by all the field. A mile further west comes the Woodlands estate, where many good horses, including Scot Free, winner of the Two Thousand, were bred in the eighties. There are many coverts on the estate, and the late owner, Mr. W. B. Van Haansbergen, though not hunting himself, was a good preserver of foxes, who entertained the hunt to breakfast at very frequent intervals. The Woodlands coverts are beautifully situated, but they have become very open at the bottom of late years, and hounds can go through them when running almost as fast as they can travel in the open. The Sawmill Wood, Sheepwalks whin, and Rippon Burn are the best of

these coverts, and usually two or three litters of foxes are bred here. But it is not an easy matter when a fox is found hereabouts to know exactly which covert he belongs to, for there is a rough field on the adjoining Colepike estate in which foxes frequently lie, and just beyond this field there is a young plantation on the Broadwood estate which is now an almost certain find. Broadwood was formerly part of Woodlands, but the property was divided in 1872, and the present owner of Broadwood, Mr. Penman, is also a great host of the hunt and a fine preserver, whose family all follow hounds. In fact, the Woodlands-Broadwood neighbourhood is absolutely the best part of the hunt, for the land is all grass, foxes are numerous, and whichever way they go there is the chance of a gallop. Half a mile north of Broadwood is Browney Bank, a cross roads with two cottages, and in the days of the old Durham County hounds this was the fixture nearly every Monday, for besides the Woodlands coverts it commanded those on the Colepike estate, which are smaller, but very good. The best of these at the present day are the Triangle and Stobilee, the first-named a five-acre plantation, grown up with gorse and undergrowth, and terribly thick, and Stobilee, a twenty-acre wood, with very good lying in places. All the coverts which have been mentioned are within a mile of Browney Bank, but are small in size, except the open Sawmill Wood, and the upshot is that the average fox found in any one of them, though he may run through several of the others, is not long in quitting the district.

And apropos the Sawmill Wood, there was for many seasons one particular corner of it—next the Woodlands Five Lane Ends—to which foxes were very partial, the lying being good and rabbits numerous. At the time in question the late Mr. Anthony Maynard was Master of the North Durham, and in 1879 he engaged a new second whipper-in, this being Richard Freeman, who was afterwards huntsman of the pack for five and twenty years, and who is an uncle of the Pytchley and the late Zetland huntsman. Hounds met at Browney Bank and drew the Sawmill Wood, and Freeman was told to gallop up the lane to the Five Lane Ends, and halloa if a fox left the covert. And quite lately he told the story at a North Durham puppy show. “It

was my first day with the pack," he said, "and I knew nothing about the country, but was told to go to the end of the wood (outside) and let everyone know if I saw a fox. As I reached the corner I saw a brace, and I began halloaing, and I halloaed while eighteen crossed the lane, but hounds never came, for they were away on the other side with another, and it took me an hour to find them."

So much for the Sawmill Wood, but I may add that when I was a boy living at Woodlands in the sixties, during the joint mastership of Mr. John Henderson, M.P., and Mr. John Harvey, we once had so many litters at Woodlands that we dug out three of them, and I took them to the kennels at Sedgefield for turning out in a part of the country where foxes were not so numerous. I shall never forget the drive, for I was alone in a Whitechapel dogcart, and the cubs, which were tied up in sacks, were never still for a moment, but kept up a perpetual heaving against my legs. It must be understood that in the 'sixties the North and South Durham packs, as now constituted, were one and the same pack, with a kennel at Sedgefield for their southern country, and a kennel at Elvet Moor (Farewell Hall) for their northern country. And curiously enough the new kennels which Mr. Rogerson built on the Mount Oswald estate some fifteen years ago are only separated by a country lane from the old Elvet Moor kennels, discarded forty years ago. The house is now occupied by Mr. Rogerson's kennel huntsman.

Going back to the physical features of the North Durham country, it should be explained that there is a country lane, four miles long and called "Long Edge," between Browney Bank and Rowley Station, and hounds cross it often half a dozen times a day, for it bisects the best of the country. It also bisects the Woodlands estate, the most westerly covert of which is Sheepwalks, the starting place of many fine hunts some years ago, but now too thin to hold any but an occasional fox, though the adjacent whin covert is an almost sure find. Of Sheepwalks I have a curious recollection which may not be out of place here, though it is entirely personal. Well, then, it must be understood that one afternoon in the winter, during Mr. Maynard's mastership, I was riding quietly between the Derwent Valley and Rowley on my way to Broomshields,



where I was staying. Just below the old kennels at Castleside a fox crossed the road, and shortly afterwards eleven couples of hounds. I was riding a horse I intended to hunt with the Durham on the following day, but the temptation was great, so I followed on. Scent was holding, and hounds ran over the North Durham boundary and went to Sheepwalks, where there was a main earth. I knew the locality of this earth, went to it, and found about two couples of hounds marking. The earth was in the heart of the wood, and I tried to entice the hounds away, but what really moved them was the sound of their companions giving tongue. I quickly left the wood, and hounds ran on to Broomshields, the very place I was going to, and there the second fox got to ground. What had happened was that a fresh fox had jumped up in Sheepwalks and taken a majority of the eleven couples on. The hounds were the Braes of Derwent, of which the late Colonel Cowen was then Master, but the curious part of the thing was that I never saw a single rider or a hunt servant, and the fact is hounds had slipped their field several miles from where they crossed my path. At Broomshields we succeeded in coaxing most of the hounds into the stable yard, and there they remained until a hunt servant arrived from Blaydon Burn the next morning. This hunt, as far as I saw it, had a seven-mile point, but I have quite forgotten what hounds had done before I saw them (except the fact that they had come several miles), though Colonel Cowen told me all about it the next time I saw him.

Sheepwalks, mentioned as the starting place of many good hunts, was more than half a century ago the best covert in its own particular district, and was in high repute when Mr. Russell had a pack of foxhounds at Brancepeth Castle (*circa* 1850) and for some years later. After a time, however, a long defunct gorse called the Freehold, nearly a mile to the east of Sheepwalks, used to catch up all the foxes of the district. The Freehold is now the grass field to the north-east of the most easterly entrance to the Woodlands on Long Edge lane, and there is still a well-known breeding earth among trees at one corner of it. Rippon Burn followed the Freehold as the best covert of the district, and for many years hounds used to be taken there direct from the Browney Bank

meets. The covert is a larch plantation, which at one time had heather and whin all through it, and as long as these lasted it was a certain find. And here I may remark that all through the best part of the North Durham country larch plantations with a heather bottom form the best coverts; but as the trees grow big the heather dies away, and thus it results that the lying gradually disappears. When a piece of land is newly planted with larch in this particular country, or when an old plantation from which the timber has been cleared is replanted, it takes five or six years for the bottom to become thick. But it does so automatically, and when once foxes have realised that there is good, quiet lying in the young plantations they seem to prefer them to any other sort of lying. Gorse, like heather, is natural to the countries I am writing about, and the best coverts are often made by a combination of the two plants with a plentiful sheltering of young trees. I may mention also that spruce and common Scottish fir are planted with the larch as a protection to the latter, and the young spruce of eight to fifteen years old often form a most impenetrable thicket. Indeed, though foxes as a rule breed underground in the North, one occasionally knows of litters which have been reared in the open, and notably in the Tower Wood at Greencroft—sometime during the 'eighties—a vixen had her cubs resting on the broad, interlaced branches of two spruce trees at a height of about 4ft. from the ground.

Young plantations are, as a matter of course, well fenced, and for months at a time no one but a gamekeeper—or perhaps a poacher—will ever be inside the fence. But as the trees grow, and grass takes the place of heather, it is, except when there is very strict game preserving, the custom to allow the neighbouring farmer to pasture young stock in these plantations, and this it is that causes a constant change of covert on the part of the foxes, for it must be understood that the growing of larch is one of the industries of the district, and nearly all the trees come down when they are big enough to be sold for pit props. I have mentioned these facts about the coverts because there is so much difference between the coverts of the northern and southern hunting countries. The oak copse with a hazel bottom is unknown in the counties of Durham and Northumberland, for though there is plenty of

oak there is practically no hazel. In fact, in such oak woods as there are bracken takes the place of hazel, and though this forms a fine autumn covert, and stands up well until there is fairly severe frost, it has a strong smell of its own, and is about the worst scenting ground I ever knew, and particularly harmful at cubhunting time, for there are patches of it extending over many acres, often just where cubs have been bred. The Sawmill Wood, which lies between Long Edge lane and Rippon Burn, contains a considerable amount of old beech and some magnificent spruce, some of which are nearly 100ft. high. It is, in fact, a real wood, and not a larch plantation except in one or two corners; but it is overrun with bracken, and even when I was a boy the Durham County huntsman used to complain about it. "If you could rid yon Sawmill Wood of the bracken I should kill a vast more foxes," he used to say, and most certainly the bracken is a great drawback every autumn until it is well laid by frost or snow, or both. As Rippon Burn began to decline the north-west corner, about 10 acres, of the Sawmill Wood took its place, and it was from this corner that Richard Freeman viewed the eighteen foxes over the road.

North of the Woodlands coverts is the Knitsley Valley, with a stream running through it which joins the Browney at Lanchester, four miles away. This Knitsley Valley has one long, straggling covert named Howens Gill, of which the extreme northerly end is the Braes of Derwent country, and both packs draw the gill by arrangement. There are always foxes in some part of it but it is the worst covert in either hunt to get away from, for it consists of two hanging woods, each on a steep hillside, and foxes run up and down the full length of it and cross to the other side and repeat the same game. There is too much "up the banks and down the banks" for a riding field, and possibly Surtees had Howens Gill in his mind when he wrote the conversation between Sir Moses and Cuddy Flintoff, on the return of the former from a day of up and down the banks. But if Howens Gill is rather a heartbreaking place—and bad scenting ground to boot—it has a wonderful spur which used to be called Beggar-side, but is now known as the Oak Gill. This is only a little place in acreage, but of considerable length, and with good dry lying to the south, and it has been the starting point of two



very notable hunts in recent years. In one of these Mr. Rogerson's hounds made their longest point on record, going right across the Braes of Derwent country into that of the Haydon, and finishing five-and-twenty miles from the kennels at Mount Oswald. No doubt there was at least one change of foxes, but it was a singularly fine hunt, and after leaving Muggleswick (in the Braes of Derwent country) hounds never touched a covert until they reached Espershields, quite near the town of Blanchland. They probably changed foxes at Muggleswick, where the earths were open; but there was no stop, and, as a matter of fact, they entered the covert near Combe Bridges, went close to the earths, and came into the open near the Vicarage; then, going up the grass valley of the Derwent to Edmondbyers, and thence on to Espershields, and Bog Hall, in the Haydon country, where they were stopped. The other big hunt from the Oak Gill was faster and not so long. It began with hounds going westwards to Castleside, where they turned abruptly, and were lost temporarily by most of the field. They ran, however, down the Knitsley Valley to Woodlands, thence to Browney Bank, and Bromshields, skirted Tow Law, and turning right-handed came back to Broadwood, where the fox was killed in the open. The time was one hour and ten minutes, twelve miles were covered, and there was a seven-mile point in it, while there was only one slight check at Browney Bank, and hounds recovered the line without being cast.

When hounds meet at Rowley station, which is the furthest meet from the kennels, they draw the Whitehall Plantation, and then Lord Bute's, and these are the most northerly coverts of the hunt, and fairly well foxed, though the raw material is not so much in evidence as it once was, owing to the fact that stone quarrying on a considerable scale is being carried on in the North Plantation—one of three plantations which form a chain of woods. For many years hounds used to meet at the corner of the North Plantation, nearly two miles from the present meeting place, and with great consistency foxes used to break over Eliza Farm and go down into the best country. Even now they prefer this line, but the quarrying has altered their habits, and they cannot be relied upon as they once could. At one time foxes used to run to Lord

Bute's from all parts of the hunt, and I remember one warm day very late in the season, during Mr. Maynard's mastership, when hounds worked a line very slowly from Rackwoodside, taking nearly an hour and a half to cover a distance which I saw Mr. Rogerson's hounds cover in thirty-five minutes three of four years ago. It was a bit of patient and very fine hound work, and as it was almost the last day of the season the Master was very anxious to kill the fox. He actually rode into the covert to see if an earth he knew of was closed, and, finding it was, he came back to the customary corner, where the field was drawn up. Luncheon was tackled, men got off their horses and lounged about in warm sunshine, and from the depths of the wood the occasional note of a hound was heard. Time passed, and the notes grew fewer. Many of the field departed, but the Master was still anxious, and at length at his request I went with the late Mr. Alan Greenwell (then secretary of the hunt) to look for hounds and huntsman. It is a big wood with many rides, and we searched for quite a quarter of an hour for now there was no sound at all. At length, in the heart of the wood, we suddenly dropped on a veritable tableau. Hounds were basking in the sun in an open space. The huntsman's horse was fastened to a tree by its bridle, and the huntsman himself was fast asleep with his back against the trunk of the tree, and a suspicious-looking bottle lying on the grass beside him. We woke him up, and did not give him away at the time; but after Mr. Maynard had been obliged to make a change the story leaked out. The huntsman in question is no longer living, and there is no need to mention his name. He could hunt a fox well, but latterly his sobriety was not to be relied upon. It was this same huntsman, by the way, that was the cause of an oft-told story concerning Mr. Maynard—as great an enthusiast as ever breathed. Hounds had found at Burnhopeside, and ran very nicely to the top of Charlaw Fell, where they checked. The huntsman came up and cast them, where there was a most formidable fence, close to a gate. Hounds went through the fence; the huntsman rode to the gate, found it locked, and with the eyes of his Master and the field upon him rode at the fence, which which was really something quite out of the ordinary. He went at it hard enough, and the thorns closed behind him and

his horse just as the gate had been taken off its hinges. As the field came through (the fence was high enough to prevent one seeing what had taken place) they saw the huntsman laid out flat on his back, hounds casting themselves over the field, and the horse going away for all he was worth. The Master was first to reach the fallen huntsman, and, after looking at him for a moment, he turned round and said, " We must all go home. Poor Henry's dead. Poor Henry " (he went on), " he was a gallant fellow but he'll never hunt again." And then, as he suddenly noticed that hounds had hit off the line, his voice changed to a scream as he yelled, " For'ard on! For'ard on! " Henry by this time was sitting up and taking notice (he was not hurt at all, only a little dazed), and probably Mr. Maynard, whose eyes were everywhere, had taken in the situation; but the " For'ard on! " on the top of the soliloquy was undeniably funny. During the war Lord Bute's plantations were cut down, but foxes are still to be found in the odd bits of covert which are left.

South-west of Lord Bute's the North Durham country is near the moors and very wild but the moors hereabouts are what shooting men call " low moors," and, though undulating, are not particularly steep. And what from a hunting point of view is most important, foxes seldom go on to the moors, probably because they do not like travelling among heather. There is a big and good covert named Catback, separated from the open country by a strip of heather, and this is frequently drawn; but though almost surrounded by heather, it stands at the head of a grass valley, and foxes found therein generally go down the valley, or cross the strip of heather, and reach the regular country, which hereabouts consists of large pastures of rough grass which are never ploughed, and which carry a rare scent even in the driest weather. Down the valley I mentioned just now is Foresters Lodge, a fairly large country house, beautifully situated amid pine plantations, and with a 60-acre lake in front of it. The place is " extra parochial " in that it is beyond the usual confines of the hunt but the owner, Mr. Featherstone-Fenwick, acts as host to the North Durham once or twice in every season, and there are generally foxes in his young plantations, or at the adjoining covert of Lumley Ling, and they frequently cross the narrow valley and

point for Lord Bute's, and I do not remember ever having seen one go for the open moor. Lord Bute's has been for sixty years at least a great stand by of the Durham hounds. In the 'sixties, when Dowdeswell was huntsman, hounds used to be brought to Stuartfield Lodge (the agent's house) in September, and would be quartered there for several days, and hunting every morning. In those days cubhunting—in the North, at all events—did not attract a tenth of the people it now does, and probably the meets were only sent to half a dozen landowners and tenant farmers who resided in the neighbourhood which it was intended to hunt. I was at Woodlands all one autumn and winter, owing to an accident which kept me away from school, and many a good early morning hunt I had with " 'ard Tommy Dowdeswell," as he was locally called. Lord Bute's at the time harboured quite a number of roedeer, which bred there—there are still a few in the neighbourhood—and it was a difficult matter to prevent hounds getting on to the line of one of these deer when they were out of sight. They used to break out over Whitehall Moss, and make direct for the wooded Derwent Valley, several miles away, and it was a most difficult matter to stop the pack, for Whitehall Moss was boggy and soft, and hounds could cross it much faster than a horse. Dowdeswell was a bit of a veteran when I first remember him, but as hard a man across country as I ever saw. The tallest walls had no terror for him, and on Blueskin, an angular grey—almost a blue roan—with a stringhalt but thoroughbred, and an extraordinary jumper, he rode in truly wonderful fashion. He retired when the hunt was divided in 1870, and after a spell of horse dealing and inn-keeping at Staindrop, in the Zetland country, he came back to North Durham, and resided at Cornsay, and on a pony he used to follow hounds until he was more than eighty years of age. He died some twelve or fourteen years ago, and by his wishes the tail of his old horse Blueskin was buried with him.

I have mentioned the North Durham country round Lord Bute's and Catback, and now I must take my readers further south to the neighbourhood of Satley and Broomshields, and I am inclined to think that in these days this is the best country in the hunt from a galloping point of view. Satley lies three to four miles due south of Woodlands, and

midway between the two is Butsfield Burn, which is a long narrow valley, through which runs the river Browney, hereabouts quite a small stream. Butsfield Burn was once a fine covert, but the gorse has died away at the easterly end, which for twenty years was a certain find, and now it lies in patches, over a mile of ground, and finding a fox in it is not always certain. But when one covert becomes no longer safe in this country another takes its place, and if Butsfield Burn is not so sure as it once was the neighbouring whin on Dean House farm is as thick as a gorse covert can be, and there is always a litter or two between the whin and the top part of Butsfield Burn. The two are only separated by a single field, and a find at Dean House is a pretty sight, as the covert lies in the centre of a large rough field. South of Dean House, and about a mile away, is the Parson's Whin, a portion of the Satley Glebe, and though I never knew of foxes being bred there, it is close to the Broomshields Covert of Bedlam Lane, where some thirty acres of young plantation afford nice lying, and where there is always a breed or two of foxes. They lie, too, in the Kennel Wood at Broomshields, and in the gill to the east of the hall, in a whin on West Shields farm, and a young plantation on the hill to the east of Broomshields Gill. Not many years ago the Broomshields coverts were the best of this part of the hunt, but the hall was empty for years, the shooting let, and cattle have been allowed inside the coverts. Foxes are always bred in the district, but finding them is not so simple a business as it once was, because they appear to change their quarters very often. When the late Mr. John Maddison Greenwell was alive all the interests of the hunt west of Lanchester were in his hands, and foxes were well looked after, not only on the Broomshields estate, but over a wide area of other properties, many of which were owned by non-resident landlords. John Greenwell was the greatest authority on foxes I ever met or heard of. He, so to speak, lived among them, and practically he not only knew of every litter, but, having watched them all from cubhood upwards, he knew many of them by sight. He had a marvelously quick eye for a fox, either when hunting or walking about the country, and his halloa was so powerful and so melodious that he could bring hounds the best part of a mile



to where he had seen a fox. To breed foxes and to hunt them were the great aims of his life, and the moment one season was over he began to find out what litters he had and what others there were in the district, and when these were located he would watch them right through the summer. During the warm weather of midsummer he would spend hours watching young foxes playing round the earths, for he had constructed shelters he could creep into unsuspected, and get close to these same earths. A hundred years before he was born a small amount of coal had been taken out of the very top of Broom-shields hill, and certain pitfalls had been formed which made famous breeding places for foxes. For many years there was a breed in each of two pitfalls close together in a young plantation, and owing to the lie of the ground it was possible to get within fifty feet of these earths almost at any time. The cubs from the two earths would often number almost a dozen, and as the summer wore on they were regularly trained so that when hounds came they would leave at once, and not wait to be killed in covert.

The *modus operandi* was quite simple. A fine, sunny day would be chosen, when the cubs would be basking or playing near the earth. Their proprietor and a friend, or gamekeeper, would then creep up to the boundary and throw a couple of sharp terriers over the wall, climbing over themselves and rushing one to each earth, the earths being only a few feet beyond the wall. If a cub chanced to be very near the earth he might get in, but nine times out of ten they were further afield in the young plantation. The terriers quickly found them out, and as each cub came to the earth he was headed off. For half an hour at least the hunting would go on, the cubs trying the earths time after time without success. After a while the terriers would be called off and taken away, and the whole party would recross the wall—there being steps in a certain place—and, entering the shelter, would in the next ten minutes or so see every cub in the covert disappear into one or other of the earths. This performance would be repeated a week later, and then once or twice more before the season opened, and the cubs quickly discovered that with terriers behind them there was safety in flight, and at the first sign of being hunted would break for the gill less than half a mile

away. It might have been thought that foxes which were so frequently hunted would change their quarters, but these did not. To begin with, they were four or five months old before their education began, and then a brace of terriers from whom they could slip away in the covert were not very formidable enemies, and, lastly, they were too big for the old foxes to remove. That foxes remove young cubs, carrying them in their mouths from one snug place to another, is within my knowledge, for I have actually seen them doing it; but a four or five months old cub is a strong, lusty individual, and at that time of his existence has shaken off the apron strings and become almost independent. It must be understood that the place I am writing about was an ideal one for the business I have just described. The young plantation was situated on the crown of a hill, and the earths, except for the long rank grass which grew round them, were in the open and several feet below the highest part of the covert. They are indeed—for they still exist—on a sloping bank, and from the outside of the wall a few feet away the ground falls so quickly that a man approaching from the lower ground is hidden until he reaches the wall. It would perhaps be difficult to find an exactly similar place, but I have seen young cubs hunted—exercised, we used to call it—by terriers in other coverts during the late summer, and most certainly the after consequences were satisfactory, for these cubs gave better sport than their neighbours.

No doubt it will be urged that too many cubs cannot be killed during cubhunting, and that hounds would be a little handicapped when hunting foxes which had been “exercised” by terriers, and so I must explain that at the time I am writing of—in the ’seventies and ’eighties of last century—holding up cubs in this particular district was not only unknown but almost impossible. I am seldom there now at cubhunting times, but I believe the foxes in the North Durham are hunted in ordinary fashion from the earliest meets in September, and I know they are in the adjoining Braes of Derwent country. Thirty and forty years ago there was no “field” to hold the foxes up, had it been thought of, and now very few of the coverts will allow of it being done, though when plenty of riders are out it is possible at Rackwoodside, Dean House, and

Humber Hill, and a few other gorse coverts in the open. One of the chief difficulties which foxes caused in the Broomshields district, and, indeed, much further afield, and which John Greenwell worked hard at getting the better of, was caused by the country being full of old stone drains, many of which were nearly always dry, in which foxes would breed, and where they were often hidden exactly when they were wanted. The fact is that when tile draining became universal the old stone drains were left, and after a time many of them were forgotten, especially where bracken and gorse had grown over them. The pipes, often at a lower level, caused the stone drains to become dry, and as a rule when foxes used them all entrances and exits would be hidden. Some, of course, were well known, and early in the year a terrier would be run through and the mouths secured by iron gratings, but others were constantly found in the most unlikely places, and at one time half the foxes in the country were bred in these drains. As long as one knew which drains were being used, those particular drains could be stopped at night like any other earth, but some of them were connected with others, like the trenches in France, and at times it was almost impossible to find all the entrances until a whole field had been pulled to pieces. To give an example, I have in recollection a day in the early eighties when all the Broomshields coverts were blank, though John Greenwell—who for many years was his own earth stopper—had actually watched several foxes leave two or three sets of earths on the previous evening. As may be imagined, the Squire of Broomshields was terribly upset, but for the next few days he was too busy for an investigation. On the following Sunday, however, he started a close examination of all the underground haunts of foxes in the neighbourhood, and to his great surprise his terriers bolted half a dozen in quick succession from a field drain on East Broomshields farm, which had been permanently closed at the beginning of the season, but now had the grating removed on the offchance that a fox might have found another entrance. It was obvious that there must be an unknown entrance, but search was fruitless, and “John” was in despair for some days. Then one day he was crossing the field adjoining the lane into which the drain debouched when



a rabbit jumped up and was chased by terriers into the corner of the field in which was a tiny spinney. In this spinney were rabbit holes, and both terriers had disappeared into one of the holes. But they could not even be heard, and on leaving the spinney to reconnoitre, their owner viewed a fox cantering across the field. It then struck him that there must be communication between the rabbit holes and the drain in the lane not many yards away, and bringing a man and a spade they opened out the rabbit holes and found that it was so.

While I am on the subject of John Greenwell and Broomshields I must say something about the hare hunting of the district. The wide pastures of the big (in area) Satley parish are perhaps as good a hare hunting arena as I ever saw, and I certainly never heard of any estate which had been visited by so many packs of harriers and beagles as Broomshields. John Greenwell owned a very smart pack himself for three seasons in the late 'seventies, and then he only gave them up because his health did not allow of his hunting every day of the week. But before that time I had seen at least three packs on the ground, the first I can remember being the Durham University Beagles, which were then kennelled at Lowes Barn, near Durham, and used occasionally to be brought to Cornsay overnight for a day on the Broomshields estate. Then the late Mr. Nicholas Bowser used to bring a pack of harriers from Bishop Auckland, but before the Broomshields Harriers were established the pack oftenest seen on the estate was the Wolsingham Harriers, of which a farmer named Vasey was then the Master. In the *Complete Forhunter*, published by Methuen and Co. some fourteen years ago, I made mention of Mr. Vasey and his doings, and as I do not wish to repeat myself I will only say that he was a most wholehearted hare hunter, and a great "character." In those days—before the Hares and Rabbits Act—there were a great many hares in the North Durham country, and some of the landowners were very chary about giving leave to the Wolsingham Harriers, who, they said, disturbed the country and did not kill very often because they so frequently changed on to a fresh hare when running. The upshot was that most of Mr. Vasey's hunting was done on the boundaries of the moors, near Wolsingham, but he dearly

loved a day at High Stoop or Dean House, and I once remember him running a deer from the north plantation (Lord Bute's) to the fishponds at Woodlands, where the deer took to the water, and the Master called his hounds off and beat a hasty retreat. He did not know, by the way, that his hounds were running a deer, for he had been in covert when the quarry broke away, but I told him when he joined me, a few minutes afterwards, and all he said was: "Nowt of t' sort, thou's seen a cuddy" (donkey). Even the fact that hounds ran the lane from Lord Bute's to the Five Lane Ends did not convince him.

After old Vasey's day John Greenwell's own pack hunted the district and showed fine sport. This Master was a born huntsman, first rate on the horn, and with a most melodious voice. He occasionally hunted a fox about Sand Edge, or Cat Back, and at times took his hounds into the extreme west of the Braes of Derwent country, near the moors, when if he found a fox he simply could not help hunting it. It was with these hounds, hunting round Newton Hall, the residence of Mr. Maynard, then Master of the North Durham, that I saw a free fight between hunting people and farm labourers, which I have described elsewhere; but such a thing was absolutely unusual, and I never heard of a similar occurrence anywhere in the north of England. Mr. Vasey's hounds were a very scratch lot to look at, being of all sizes, and many of them a good deal on the leg. He liked a big hound, because of the high stone walls, and here I may remark that harriers always did better than beagles in this country for the same reason; but this applied chiefly to the most westerly ground, where the walls were much higher than they are lower down the country. Near the moors all the fences are formidable walls; further down the valley there are two or three thorn fences to every wall, and roundabout Lanchester the country is suitable even for small beagles. Mr. Greenwell's hounds were a great improvement on the Wolsingham. Their owner went here and there, procuring drafts, at a time when there were many harriers in the market, and as he drafted both at the head and tail he soon had a fairly even pack, which were wonderfully under control.

I used to whip in to him at times, and I have one particular

recollection of a very curious day we had together. The meet was at the Bay Horse, Castleside, when Mr. Greenwell owned the adjoining farm of Hole House. We had only arranged the hunt at Broomshields overnight, and there was no "field"; in fact, when we started only "Bob" Davison, the host of the Bay Horse, was with us. The intention was to find a hare on Hole House farm, and hounds were taken to a few acres of turnips and at once went away on a strong line, for we saw nothing. They quickly crossed the road into Castleside Wood, and, getting through it much quicker than we did, were soon two fields in front. Running on hard, they were soon on the open moor at Whitehall, where they began to travel more slowly through the heather. We were now pretty sure that they had got on to the line of a travelling fox—it was at the beginning of February—and we debated whether we should stop them while we had the chance. It was decided "just to see what they made of it," and a moment later they were going again, much faster because they were on a sheep track. Bearing gradually left-handed, they reached the Stuartfield Lodge Plantation, and now we agreed that if possible they should be stopped. But the covert just named was then terribly thick, and difficult for horses in the centre, and, though we could hear hounds, we could not reach them. After some time, and a great deal of horn blowing, it became certain they had gone on; but we could find no trace of them, and we separated, and each of us rode about the country until dark, vainly looking for hounds. When I reached Broomshields John Greenwell was standing at the kennel door, and announced that a single hound had cast up. We spent an anxious evening, going constantly to the kennel; but I do not recollect that any more hounds turned up, and it was a night of terrible storm, so that anything like a search party was out of the question. We were astir early the next morning, and shortly after daylight a lad on a pony appeared, with a dirty piece of paper in his hand, on which was scrawled, "Dogs is here." There was no name or address, but the lad explained that he came from an out-of-the-way moorland farm, that just before dusk on the preceding afternoon the dogs had rushed into their "back hemmel"—a local word describing a cowhouse, or similar outbuilding. This particular "back

hemmel " happened to be empty, and the farmer had shut hounds in, and when we got there he explained that " They had fair rived the place down in the night." They had done no harm, but they had not been fed, and had no doubt made a terrible din, and it had never struck the farmer what was wrong. After some investigation we found part of the brush and part of the mask and other slight remains of a fox, but practically all the bones as well as the flesh and fur had been devoured. Mr. Greenwell, when his health became indifferent, sold his harriers to the late Lord Lonsdale (brother of the present peer), and they were located at or near Penrith for the use of the tenants on the Lowther estate.

After Mr. John Greenwell disposed of his harriers, hare hunting at Broomshields was by no means at an end. The Durham Beagles, of which Mr. Creighton Foster was Master in the early 'eighties, and the Darlington Foot Harriers, under the control of Mr. T. Watson, were very frequent visitors over a period of several seasons. Creighton Foster was, like Mr. Vasey, of Wolsingham, quite a " character," and there was a certain amount of festivity mixed up with his hunting, nor did he appear to care much what sort of sport he showed so long as he ran a hare or two and killed an occasional one. He was, in fact, very keen in the forenoon, but he was not a young man, and when he became tired he would hand his horn to anyone of his field who would take it, and, finding a coign of 'vantage on high ground, watch the proceedings from afar. At such times one naturally wanted to be with hounds, but those who stayed near the Master were entertained by his curious comments on the hunting which was taking place, by a wonderful flow of chaff, bestowed on whoever might be near, and by a string of stories concerning the sport of the district. Creighton was an ardent foxhunter, and had been a hard man to hounds, but he was well beyond middle age when he became a " currant jelly " huntsman, and had lost his keenness. Still he got to hounds pretty quickly when they killed, and it was hardly fair to say of him—as it was said at the time—that he hunted the luncheon cart all the forenoon, and the Broomshields saddle room afterwards. This saddle room, by the way, was for some years a sort of sporting club for the district, and on hunting days many were enter-

tained there, as well as at the hall. Hunt servants were always very welcome, and farmers, gamekeepers, and others would find their way there on any day that either foxhounds or harriers were in the neighbourhood; but the great day was Saturday in the winter months, when all and sundry were allowed to try their greyhounds over the estate. John Greenwell was almost as fond of coursing as he was of hunting, and as there were scores of greyhounds within a ten-mile radius, and leave for trials elsewhere was not easily obtained, it will be understood that there was a rush to Broomshields, especially during the inclosed coursing boom, when meetings were being constantly held at Gosforth Park. The only drawback, from the greyhound owners' point of view was that the hares were too strong, and that in consequence some of the greyhounds got too big a dose, but the demand for trials never showed any decrease, and the Saturday coursings were continued almost up to Mr. Greenwell's death in 1886.

"Tom" Watson, Master of the Darlington, was the exact antithesis of Creighton Foster as a hare hunter. His keenness was quite remarkable and his running powers simply extraordinary. His pack, too, were excellent in their work, well cared for, and admirably hunted. They were the first pack to kill five hares in a day on the estate, and I may emphasise the fact that each of these five hares stood up for quite half an hour. Indeed, a weak hare was almost unknown in the Satley district in the 'eighties, and it is on record that on one occasion, where there was a good deal of frost in the ground, twenty-seven greyhound trials were run without a single hare being killed, but I must add that in nearly every case the hare, after being well coursed, found shelter in one of the larch plantations of the estate. To return for a moment to the Darlington, the pack used to be brought to Tow Law by train on the hunting days, and when the sport was over many of the field would drive or go by train to Durham, thirteen miles away, to be entertained at dinner by the late Mr. J. F. Bell, of North End, father of the present joint Master of the North Durham, and of Captain W. Bell, of the 12th Lancers, who was wounded in the war.

About this same period I have a recollection of Mr. "Jack" Pease, now Lord Gainford, bringing a pack of beagles



to High Stoop, or Houslip Bridge, on the borders of the Broomshields estate, but the successors of Mr. Creighton Foster's beagles were the pack which Mr. J. E. Rogerson owned for a season or two before he took the North Durham foxhounds, and the defunct Shotley Bridge beagles, of which Mr. Arthur Falconer was Master. Each of these packs showed excellent sport, and the Shotley Bridge pack once rivalled Mr. Watson's feat of killing five hares in a day. Both packs were followed by an unmounted field, and at this period—the middle and later 'eighties—these two packs and the Darlington each came in turn, there often being hare hunting in the neighbourhood every week. The Durham continued their visits under a succession of masters, and before the war Mr. Frank Bell, who bought Mr. Allgood's harriers from North Tyne, hunted the country very regularly and showed excellent sport.

And now to go back to foxhunting in the North Durham country, mention must be made of Gladdow, two miles north of Broomshields, and which has been for fifty years, and still is, one of the very best coverts in the hunt. Gladdow is placed on a steep hillside, and its virtue lies in the fact that when one part of the covert becomes thin another part is always ready to take its place as a fox sanctuary. It consists of two larch plantations, a small wood of forest timber, in which there is strong undergrowth of holly and other shrubs, and about half a dozen acres of gorse, which adjoin the covert on its east side, and which at the present day is practically a certain find. Perhaps there have been more good runs from Gladdow than from any other covert in the hunt, and one of my first recollections of it goes back to the early days of Mr. Maynard's mastership, when hounds ran to the North Plantation (Lord Bute's), thence to The Sneepe (Braes of Derwent country), Greenhead, and then, after a widish circle in the Shotley country, came back to Mosswood, where they killed in the road, close by the woodman's cottage. The great thing about Gladdow was that its foxes had no notion of hanging about their own country, but always went for a distant point, and this no doubt caused the high reputation which the place has always held. Mr. John Greenwell owned a part of it, and in his day nine finds out of ten were in that part, but now the

best part of the covert is on the Ushaw College estate. Gladdow lies in a secluded vale, with no population near it, and a quieter place for foxes could hardly be found. Nor does it matter what time of day it is drawn, and I have known hounds take a hunted fox through it about one o'clock, and draw it at 3.30, and get a great hunt. The occurrence I have in mind took place some fifteen years ago, and hounds ran, with hardly a check to speak of, until six, when it was too dark to go on, and an opportunity occurred of stopping them. The huntsman's horse had given in, and a big field (this hunt came at the close of a good day) was reduced to four or five, when hounds were stopped at Satley.

The huntsman came up a few minutes later on a pony borrowed from a farmer, and the only trouble was that the fox—who was seen not far in front of hounds just before they were stopped—was not brought to hand. I could mention scores of good runs from Gladdow which I have seen, and I know of others which took place in my absence; but old runs are not always interesting, except to those who were in them, and I shall only mention one more, which took place in March, 1883, shortly before Mr. Maynard's mastership came to an end. Hounds were advertised for Satley, and as the season was nearing its close there was a large field. But Satley lies 800 ft. above sea level, and when people arrived from the lower country they found a hard frost in the neighbourhood of the meet. Matters were better at twelve o'clock; but the Master did not want to hunt, and probably would not have done so had not a gamekeeper arrived with the information that a fox was lying on a little bit of ploughed land adjoining High Gladdow. As a rule such stories do not bear much fruit, but this was a true one, for as hounds entered the field the fox was viewed leaving it on the other side. Scent was as good as it could be, and hounds raced alongside the Gladdow Beck to its confluence with the Browney, and thence down the valley to Greenwell Ford and left-handed to Newbiggen, going over the frequently used point-to-point course. They then ran through Woodlands, Rippon Burn, the North Plantation (Lord Bute's), and across the Darlington railway at Burr Hill station. By this time the field was greatly reduced, for hounds had been going best pace for nearly an hour, and had

never been handled for a moment. On the far side of the railway hounds could be seen going over the open moor, and it looked hopeless, but the fox had not liked the heather, and five minutes later he was viewed bending to the left. He recrossed the railway at Salter's Gate, went by Woodburn and Butsfield Burn to the Black Banks—then a strong covert—and over Hall Hill Farm to the College Wood at Gladdow, where they caught him. The wonderful thing about the hunt was that hounds went right through it without a check, or, rather, they were always able to set themselves right when they faltered, and were never touched by the huntsman, who, as a matter of fact, had to stop near Burnhill owing to his horse being beaten, and only saw the first part of it. From Greenwell Ford to where hounds turned beyond Burn Hill is seven miles, and from the turn to the kill at Gladdow five miles, and, in fact, the hunt was oblong in shape. For the last half-hour there were only two riders with hounds, and one of the two came to grief at timber on Land House Farm, not a quarter of a mile from the end. The other succeeded in recovering the brush and mask, both in a dilapidated condition, but he had to leave his horse and wade waist deep through the Gladdow Beck, which was in high flood after a thaw and quite an impossible jump. And, very curiously, within a few minutes a great number of people cast up. The Master (on wheels) and several others had never left the district, for hounds had slipped away at top speed, and many had funked the going. All of these had stayed in the neighbourhood of Gladdow, which was to have been the first draw of the day, but after the kill there was a general adjournment to Broadwood, then the residence of Mr. G. G. Taylor Smith, a great supporter of the hunt, where a certain amount of festivity was a natural consequence of such a hunt. This hunt will always live in my memory, because I do not remember ever seeing hounds cover such a distance of ground without at least one or two checks; but there can be little doubt that the same fox was in front of the pack all the way, for they never faltered in going through the two or three coverts which were in the line, and the fox came back into the country he had been found in, and was killed barely a mile from where the hunt commenced.



John Greenwell, who was a fine judge of everything connected with hunting, and not given to overestimating the doings of hounds, held a strong opinion to the effect that this was the best run he ever knew of with the North Durham, and I am much inclined to agree with him. A better line could not be found in this particular country, for hounds ran almost into Lanchester without touching a covert except the few acres of Robinson's Wood. They then went on to Woodlands, all open country, until they crossed a corner of the Sawmill Wood, near the Five Lane Ends. Through Rippon Burn they travelled so fast that hounds were two fields ahead when the riders got through the wood, and when they reached Lord Bute's they merely ran down the North Plantation inside the wall, and went straight out at the west end. Of course, the fox was an exceptional one for any country, and, judged by his mask, about four or five years old.

I seem to have written a good deal about John Greenwell and the hunting he looked after, but, as was recognised at the time, he was quite an exceptional sportsman, and had the knack of doing everything well. With all his knowledge he was a shy and retiring man, who would never attend a public function in case he might be asked to make a speech, and who never threw his tongue except when he was hunting hounds. He was for a time in the 4th battalion of the Durham Light Infantry (then a militia regiment), and he was for a few terms at Cambridge, and I feel that I would not be doing him justice unless I recounted a little story of his life in either place. The militia episode comes first, and is as follows: The recruits of the regiment had two months' training at the old barracks in Durham every spring before the full regiment went into camp. I was staying at Broomshields, and John, then one of the senior subalterns, and I drove one Saturday to Durham to dine at the mess, and a friend, who was serving with the recruits, was to return with us, having leave for Sunday. It was a guest night, and a festive one, and about midnight we started on our homeward drive of thirteen miles. John decided to go by Esh instead of by Lanchester, and drove, while our friend was on the back seat of a high dogcart. All went well until we reached Aldin Grange, about two miles out of Durham, and here there was a bridge over the river Browney.

But before the bridge was built there was a ford, and at the time I am writing of the old road through the ford was still open. It was a dark night, and the road into the ford came just before the bridge. Whether he meant it, or was confused by the want of light I do not know, but our driver turned into the ford, and as the horse slowed down into the water, and the cart jerked a little, there was a heavy splash, caused by the militiaman falling off behind. "Pull up!" I shouted; but the only answer I got was, "That's just what we wanted. That's lightened the load nicely. Now we shall get up the hill all right. Just think of it, we've drowned a militiaman!" The "load" had been down in the water, and was, of course, dripping wet, but by walking up the hills and running down them (he was an active boy), with his hand on the tail-board, he covered most of the eleven miles on his feet, and was none the worse for his ducking.

The Cambridge business was a visit I paid him, and first I should say that John did not go up until he was two or three years over the usual age, and that he went to Downing simply because he had heard that one of the dons (Mr. Perkins) was secretary of the Cambridgeshire. I had never been at Cambridge (except in a Newmarket train), and when John asked me to pay him a visit, he explained that he had put off his own sight-seeing until I came (he had been up at least two terms). Well, I reached Cambridge late one night, and next morning there was a cheery breakfast party in John's rooms, during which time a guide sat in the passage with a tankard of beer in his hand. About twelve o'clock, after an argument as to the course to be followed, we set out, and the first place we reached was a stable where sundry of the party had a horse or so at livery. There was a longish delay here, and then an adjournment to another stable, and then, I think, to a third. Then we passed a place "where they sold the best beer in Cambridge," and that caused another check, and from this place we went down a yard to see a litter of terrier puppies and a beagle or two at walk. Then I was taken to see the prettiest barmaid in the town, and all this time the guide kept muttering, "What about King's College chapel?" and so forth. At last one of the party who had constituted himself as our leader very early in the proceedings, said, "Now for the sights.

This way," and he rattled down a back street. At the end of this street he tipped the guide and told him to shove off, and, nipping into a stable yard, hustled us all into a pair-horse waggonette which was standing all ready to start, and in this we drove to the Cambridgeshire kennels, and spent the afternoon (it was a summer term) in an inspection of the pack. I left the next day, and when John Greenwell finally "came down" he was not quite clear whether he had ever seen the sights, except on the particular day I have mentioned.

South and west of the Gladdow-Broomshields country there are certain wide, open tracts of "white" land, which include Hedley Hope Fell and Stanley Moss. Foxes lie out on the Moss, and if found there must make a fair point; but this particular country is bad from a riding point of view, for the hills are steep and much of the ground very wet and only half drained. There is, however, a fine gorse covert in the open on Hedley Hope Common, which is known as Cuddy's Burn, or Cuddy's Hills, but from which particular Cuddy the name came I have never heard. Cuddy is short for Cuthbert in this country, and also is a local word meaning a donkey. The name Cuthbert is very common in the north, and Surtees, it will be remembered, gave the name to one of his finest characters, Cuddy Flintoff, in *Ask Mamma*. Not far from Hedley Hope some years ago—but on the other side of the ridge of hills—dwelt one Cuthbert Mawson, who was always known as "Cuddy Mossum." This particular Cuddy was a rough-and-ready foxhunter, keen as mustard, but though a wealthy man he turned out in deplorable style, and at times I have seen him in an ordinary suit of clothes, with the trousers stuffed into an old pair of top boots, which, he said, belonged at an earlier period of their career to a postboy. His horse was always badly groomed, and it was marvellous how his saddle and bridle held together; but he knew the country and the run of the foxes, and occasionally would turn up at the end of a long hunt when very few were left. On one occasion during Mr. Maynard's mastership hounds ran a fox from the Brancepeth country to ground in a field drain not far from Crook. The Master was very anxious to have the fox out, and as it was late in the afternoon, and the place looked a simple one, he decided to dig, and a couple of spades were quickly brought

from the nearest farmhouse. But difficulties soon arose, for the drain forked quite close to where the fox had gone in, and at least a couple of hounds had disappeared, and had apparently stuck somewhere. Local labourers kept coming up, and at length the Master shouted, "Do any of you men know the lie of this drain?" And then Cuddy, who had been watching the proceedings, quietly observed, "Those men know nought, but here's one coming who ought to know the drain, for he was about bred up in't." This from a remarkably silent man was thought to be final and conclusive, and full charge was given to the newcomer, who quickly liberated the hounds, and a few minutes later drew the fox with his own hands, and held him out to the Master in the simplest way, evidently expecting that as he himself knew how to handle a fox other people would be able to take it from his hand just as easily. Hounds were in a distant corner of the field, but, as a matter of course, they seemed to know the moment of liberation, and after they had broken their fox up (it was now quite dark, so that there was no question of law) we adjourned to Cuddy's house, not far away, and were regaled on cake and port wine. I was never in the house except on that occasion, but I remember the walls were decorated with hunting prints, which alternated with pictures of fat, prize-winning cattle. Shortly after that date poor Cuddy had a shocking accident. He was trotting his horse in the dark along the back lane of the village when he was caught round the neck by a clothes line, pulled off, and severely injured, and, if memory serves, he did not live long afterwards.

The hill, which reaches its highest points about Hedley Hope and Tow Law, and divides the Browney and Dearness valleys, acts as a sort of natural barrier to the Lanchester portion of the North Durham country but beyond and slightly to the west it is a triangle, the points of which are Tow Law, Witton-le-Wear, and Wolsingham, and at one time this was very favourite hunting ground. Now, however, mining operations have spoilt all the eastern part, and though hounds meet both at Witton-le-Wear and Wolsingham, they only go occasionally to those places which are very remote from the kennels. The river Wear divides the North Durham from the Zetland country and west of Bishop Auckland, and either pack may

cross from one country to the other. The North Durham a few years ago ran to the Grove, and I have known of several couples of the Zetland running to ground at Broomshields. They had come from the Black Banks, just east of Wolsingham, and a whipper-in was sent after them, and had no trouble in recovering them. But as far as my experience goes the foxes from the Black Banks, or from the Harperley estate on the North Durham side of the Wear, merely cross and recross the Wear, and do not leave the district, while if they get a little way into the neighbouring country they are stopped and brought back. East and north of this Wear Valley country are the Brancepeth coverts, and though collieries are much more numerous than they once were, there is still a fine stretch of country between Cornsay and the Wear at Sunderland Bridge—about ten miles in distance—all of which is very regularly hunted. Quite near Cornsay lies the Almshouses Whin, a sure find, and fairly good to get away from, as foxes go over the Cornsay Hill to Gladdow or down the Dearness valley to the Monkey's Nest, which is also a whin covert, on the site of of the once famous Town's Plantations. I can remember this district when the collieries were just beginning to appear, and when it was all plain sailing from Lord Bute's to Brancepeth, and even now the country is not greatly cut up, because a colliery and its cottages, coke ovens, and so forth are always concentrated and cover no great area of ground. There is none of the straggling of a suburban district, or even of a large country village; but a coal pit or two, possibly coke ovens, a few railway sidings, and several rows of streets of cottages all dumped down together in a very small space.

From a hunting point of view the colliery railways present the greatest difficulty, but of course all the crossings are known, and it seldom happens that a field is hung up, for gates are frequent, on account of all the farming interests. Curiously enough, hounds may meet in a colliery village, and hunt all day within a mile or two of the collieries, and yet never go very near them. Whether foxes visit them for the sake of the poultry at night, these same foxes do not seem to care about going into the vicinity of the pits when they (the foxes) are being run by hounds, and I believe that the same sort of thing has been noted in other colliery countries. In the North Durham the



pitfalls caused by mining near the surface are a greater hindrance to hunting than the collieries themselves; but it must be understood that I am writing of one particular part of the hunt, and not of the north-western quarter, in which there are no collieries and a very thin population. Ivesley Pastures, which are open fields covered with heather and gorse, and Rowley lie south of Town's Plantations, and at the Ridings, close by, there was some years ago a single litter of ten fox cubs, as was proved at the time. As may be imagined, they were small and weak, and nearly all of them were killed during cubhunting without affording any sport worth the name. A little further south is Hedley Hope, a strong covert on a hillside, with the Dearness stream separating it from Stanley Wood. (The Dearness is formed of two streams, one of which comes down from the Cornsay valley and the other down the Hedley Hope valley, and which meet near Waterhouses.) These coverts are a great stronghold of foxes, and they form the western end of a chain of woods, of which Ragpath and Waterhouses are more easterly. South of this valley the ground rises gradually to Weather Hill, which, one thinks, is now the best of all the Brancepeth coverts, for it includes young plantations which are snugly placed, miles away from any population, and which afford the driest lying imaginable. Beyond, in the next valley, and still further south, are the Middles and Stockley Gill, and foxes ring the changes consistently between all the coverts I have mentioned. In fact, great sport is of frequent occurrence on the Brancepeth estate; but as a rule the points are short, and I have known hounds travel between Waterhouses Wood, Weather Hill, and the Middles half a dozen times in one afternoon. Indeed, I have in recollection a hunt of about twenty years ago, when hounds found at the Middles, and were runing for three and a half hours, with no checks worthy of the name, and yet were never more than three miles from where they found. On that occasion they covered quite five-and-twenty miles of country, always at a holding pace, and when darkness came only three or four of a fairly large field were left. It must be understood that there are no collieries or villages between the Waterhouses district and Brancepeth, and only the smallest agricultural population.



The Brancepeth coverts, owned by Lord Boyne, are beautifully kept, and it would be difficult to find a better covert than the Middles, though just lately the young plantations at Weather Hill seem to be more favoured by foxes. The Middles is a large plantation, and with all sorts of lying, but much of it has a heather bottom, and at the moment I cannot recollect having seen it drawn blank—and I must have seen it drawn between fifty and a hundred times at least. It is intersected by wide grass rides, and there is an earth about the centre of the covert and another near the stream at the north end. For cubhunting there could hardly be a better place, for foxes can always be viewed as they cross the rides but it is practically a sure find always, though, because it is at the head of a little valley, it is seldom a first draw, and I am inclined to think that hounds run into it more frequently than they draw it. I have a recollection of it saving a blank day on two occasions, the first being many years ago, when hounds met at Witton Gilbert, and drew until four o'clock without finding. It was nearly dark when they reached the Middles, but they found there, and ran straight to Gladdow, half a dozen miles away, and where the earths were open. Henry Haverson was then huntsman, and I stayed with him an hour or two at Gladdow trying to collect hounds, who were busy among several fresh foxes. The second occasion was when the mange epidemic was at its worst, some years ago, in a season when the North Durham only killed two and a half brace of clean foxes, all the others being more or less mangy. Lord Boyne is a great benefactor to this side of the hunt, for he owns a large tract of well-foxed and very sporting country, and though he himself is Master of the adjoining South Durham country, and now seldom out with the North Durham, he practically supplies the raw material for about one day in every fortnight.

North of the Brancepeth country comes the Lanchester valley, about twelve miles in length, from Durham to Iveston, where lies the most northerly covert. Time was when this was the best riding country in the hunt, but there are now three large collieries in the valley, and though they are some miles apart, they have altered the character of the hunting, and whereas foxes used to run week after week from Hill Top

to certain places west of Lanchester, and *vice versa*, they now more frequently cross the valley, and they are nothing like so numerous as they once were. At the Durham end of the valley, Sniperley Moss, some plantations near Ushaw College, and Hill Top are the chief coverts; but Hill Top, formerly a great stronghold, is much thinner than it was a few years ago, and not so sure a find. Opposite Hill Top, on the other side of the Browney, which hereabouts has assumed the proportions of a river, are Lord Durham's Langley coverts—where many big bags have been made by Royalty in comparatively recent years—and west of Langley, Burnhopeside, formerly the property of the late Mr. George Fawcett, of coursing celebrity, and of which the late Mr. Alan Greenwell, of Durham, for many years secretary of the hunt, had the shooting, and strictly preserved foxes for a long period. Burnhopeside is a famous covert, where foxes are always bred, and to which they run from many parts of the hunt, and it is snugly placed on the side of a hill, with the earths well secluded. At Greenwell Ford, a mile and a half west of Burnhopeside, there are young plantations which doubtless will hold foxes shortly; but Hollybush, a whin covert and a certain find for many years, has been ploughed out. One other fine covert in this neighbourhood, midway between Greenwell Ford and Gladdow, is Rackwoodside, a 20-acre whin on a steep hillside, where the field can stand on the top and watch every fox that moves. Probably the average North Durham man would consider Rackwoodside the best covert in the hunt, and I am not sure that the claim would not be justified. Foxes are always bred there, and I am inclined to think that it affords (at the present time) better sport than any other covert one could name.

West of Lanchester are the Greencroft coverts, and further west Iveston Gill, which is, however, so remote that it is seldom drawn. But at times it has afforded a good hunt, and I have in mind a very fine hunt from it in the 'seventies. Hounds ran a fox there from the Tower Wood at Greencroft which went to ground. Hounds were being called away when a fresh fox was viewed, and this one hounds ran to Bogle Hole, Howens Gill, Sheepwalks, Butsfield, Broomshields, and thence left-handed to Low Mill, where they killed. This hunt was

done at a rattling pace, and it is impressed on my memory because Mr. Maynard had never been at Iveston Gill before, and, in fact, did not know of its existence. When the then Master took the North Durham he had just come into the country from Yorkshire, and though at the time of this run he had been Master for three or four seasons, he had never seen Iveston Gill, which is rather hidden in a fold of the hills. But after this fine hunt I was asked to look after the covert, which is only a little, neglected-looking place, and I found that its ownership was disputed, that two adjoining farmers claimed the eatage, and that anyone and everyone went into the covert as they liked. It held foxes because of an impenetrable whin in part of it, and I quickly discovered that a cottager who lived not far off was in the habit of waiting for the foxes with a gun, and sending those he shot to be stuffed. The place was what Surtees called "extra parochial," and is of small account in the doings of the hunt, though foxes go there, on account of the pitfalls, which are very difficult to "stop." East of Greencroft there is a very good covert called Burnhope, and near it Gee's Whin, which was burnt not long ago, but is growing up again.

At one time this was about the thickest gorse I ever saw, and Mr. Rogerson used always to go in on foot when he drew it, while "night shift" miners who had come to see a hunt would help him. Even then it was a most difficult matter to get a fox to leave, for the whin is at least ten acres, and there are no rides or open spaces. Gee's Whin is at the top of the hill, and on the eastern side of this hill there is a long chain of coverts, many of which are owned by Lord Durham. These extend from Burnhope to Sacriston, and though they are for the most part in a long, narrow, wooded ravine, there are certain spurs, such as Taylor's Plantation. The whole form a fine chain of coverts, from which many foxes are found; but Sacriston Wood, at the south-eastern end of the chain, is the great stronghold, and the foxes bred there—which are looked after by Colonel Blackett, of Acorn Close—afford a supply for quite a big neighbourhood. There is, too, a covert named The Hag, a little east of Nursingfield Gill, and in my early days hunting men used to talk of the best run of many years having ended there. This hunt took place in

the late 'sixties, and though I have not the exact date, I have an account of the run which appeared in the local paper. Hounds found in Rippon Burn, passed close by Woodlands Hall, ran nearly to Castleside, turned through Lord Bute's, and on by The Hermitage, Satley, and Broomshields, down the valley to Gladdow, thence to Browney Bank, Colepike, Square House, Hamsteels, and down the Browney nearly to Hill Top. They crossed the river, west of Hill Top, and ran through the Langley coverts and Nursingfield Gill, killing in a little ravine at Holmside. Those who know the country and how far apart such places as Castleside and Holmside, or Broomshields and Holmside, are will appreciate the distance covered, which works out at over twenty miles, without allowing for the twists and turns. The time was three and a half hours, and seven were up at the finish.

All the parts of the North Durham country which I have already described are on the western side of Durham and north of the river Wear. There remain a considerable district due north of Durham, and another portion of the country south of the Wear, and both were particularly popular not many years ago; but the collieries have increased both in size and number, and there are numerous "pit" railways and a good deal of wire. Indeed, this country has to a great extent collapsed, and, as far as I can judge, foxes do not often leave it now when hunted, but ring the changes from one covert to another, and seldom go very far afield. When Mr. Maynard lived at Newton Hall, about two miles north of Durham, Red House Gill was a famous place for sport, and meets at the kennels were always well attended. Red House Gill is a hanging covert on the river Wear, of considerable length, and opposite parts of it are the coverts of Cocken Hall, which also clothe the river banks, while further south, round a bend of the river, is Brass-side Wood. At times foxes would run up the banks and down the banks all day long, and vary the proceedings by crossing the river, and recrossing it again a little later; but at the time I have in mind they used also to go far afield, and I recollect in one season that a fox from Red House Gill was killed by the lodge gate at Broomshields, and another in one of the meadows below Cole Pike Hall. In the first run, which very few saw, because the pack had divided,



and the smaller portion were throwing their tongues lustily on the banks when the bigger lot got away, hounds went to Hill Top, Rackwoodside, Hall Hill, and, passing to the east of Satley, caught their fox on the road a mile beyond the village, and just beyond the Broomshields Lodge. In the other hunt they ran by Barras Hill, Foalfoot, Cold Park, Burnhopeside, and Greenwell Ford to Colepike, and both gallops were equally good and with a long point. The main London to Edinburgh line is on an embankment above the end of Red House Gill, and just where foxes used generally to break, and if hounds got over it without being observed and went straight on it was not an easy matter to catch them. Towards the end of his mastership Mr. Maynard used to remain near this vital spot, where there is a farm road under the railway, and would not leave it until all chance of a fox crossing the line seemed to have disappeared. The Arbour House coverts, Bog Wood, the Black Dene at Southill—close by Plawsworth station—Potter House Wood, Barras Hill, The Hermitage covers, and a few small places at Whitehill conclude the tally of coverts in this part of the hunt, for the North Durham no longer go to Lambton Castle or Ravensworth, as they did, occasionally, in Mr. Maynard's time. South and east of the Wear much of the country which used to be hunted has been given up owing to industrialism. This applies chiefly to the country about Penshaw, Silksworth, Burdon, Rough Dene, and so forth. The Cocken coverts are still hunted, and the south side of the river from Shincliffe to Whitworth, this including Croxdale, where foxes are numerous, Tudhoe, and Whitworth. There is a bit of nice country immediately south of Croxdale, but the best part of the North Durham south of the river is round about Shadforth, west and south of Elemore. This is good riding country, and very open; but hounds do not go there so often as they once did, and lately I have observed that at least three meets out of every four are on the north side, and nearly half of them in the western end of the country.

Having described the country, I may go on to say that the North Durham Hunt was established in 1872. Before that date the Durham County hounds hunted what are now the North and South Durham countries, and I do not intend to

write much about what took place previous to the division of the country. The bare facts as to the roll of Masters and so forth are to be found in Mr. Richard Ord's book *Sedgefield in the 'Seventies and 'Eighties*, and also in *Baily's Hunting Directory*; but since the division of the country I have known the North Durham intimately, and, as I have explained, I had a full season with the Durham County before the division took place, and scores of days in Christmas and Easter holidays. My very earliest recollection of the Durham goes back to the late 'fifties, when as an infant I saw hounds at Woodlands, and scrambled after them on a pony. I think Tom Harrison must have been huntsman then, but I did not really know any huntsman until Dowdeswell came in 1867. Tom Harrison (whose name was John) committed suicide in 1860, being afraid of going blind, and there was a quaint story circulated in the hunt for long enough afterwards to the effect that hounds were brought to a meet one morning by the two whippers-in. Up came the Master—Colonel Johnson—and asked where Tom was. "Please, sir, he's put himself down," answered the whip, sawing away at his cap, and when inquiries were made it was found that the story was true, and hounds were sent home. Colonel Johnson gave up the mastership at the end of the 1860-61 season, and was succeeded by the late Mr. John Henderson, M.P., for Durham City, who was only in office for a single season, and who was followed by a committee, which was in existence for two seasons. In 1865 Mr. Henderson came forward again in conjunction with Mr. John Harvey, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and the joint mastership lasted until 1872, when the country was divided, and Mr. Harvey became the first Master of the South Durham. It was during this joint mastership that I had my first real spell of hunting, and as I always thought hunting the one great be all and end all of life, it will be understood that things impressed themselves on my memory even more forcibly than they have since done. I can actually remember certain hunts which took place in the season of 1867-8 almost field by field, and I can recall to mind nearly everyone who was hunting with the pack, how they rode, and so forth; and one pathetic and yet comic scene I can remember which took place in Long Edge lane, just west of Browney Bank. Hounds had met at the place



just named—as they did nearly every Monday when hunting the northern part of the country—and Dowdeswell, after five or ten minutes' law, moved up the lane, intending to draw the Freehold, and if he did not find there to go on to Rippon Burn. Neither of the Masters was present, and the huntsman had not gone a quarter of a mile when he was suddenly ordered to stop. What had happened was that a dispute had arisen between three magnates of the hunt, each of whom wanted some of his own coverts drawn, and it was not until hounds had moved off that they realised the pack were being taken to coverts owned by a fourth party, who did not hunt but was a fine fox preserver. I have explained that Brownéy Bank is handy for a whole string of coverts, but unless any special arrangements had been made it was customary to draw the Woodlands coverts first, and in this particular case Dowdeswell had orders from Mr. Henderson to carry out the usual programme. But one member wanted the Triangle and Stobilee drawn; another wanted hounds to go to Butsfield, of which he had the shooting; and the third was most anxious for hounds to be taken to Stockerley Gill, and thence to the coverts near his home. Each of the three claimed that it was his turn, and Dowdeswell was assailed with a number of direct orders. There was a big field, who, I seem to remember, rather enjoyed the row, for the rivalry as to finds between these squires was rather pronounced at the time; but poor Dowdeswell was very much upset, and, after a time, he burst into tears, and, telling the whippers-in to look after the hounds, started to ride away, having stated in a broken voice that he was going home to send in his resignation. Meantime the quarrel was fast and furious, and there was talk of pistols for two or three couples at least, and so forth, and what might have happened one cannot say, but a *deus ex machina* in the person of a late comer appeared at a gallop, and announced that a fox had just crossed Long Edge a few hundred yards away. The huntsman was now out of sight, but the whips, without waiting for orders, galloped hounds to the spot, hit off the line, and, as luck would have it, fox and hounds almost crossed the huntsman—now more than a mile away—on his road home. The determination to resign was quickly forgotten, for Dowdeswell instantly joined

the pack, and the run which followed was just good enough to cause a general all-round reconciliation.

During the joint mastership hounds used to be three weeks at the Sedgefield kennels and three weeks at the Elvet Moor—or Farewell Hall as they were generally called—kennels, alternately; and during the three Sedgefield weeks there was no fox hunting in North Durham, and then it was that hunting with beagles and harriers had in a great degree to take the place of the foxhounds. But John Greenwell, then a boy of about fifteen, was living at Broomshields, and being tutored by the rector of Lanchester, to whose house he rode when it suited him—but not oftener. Indeed, he never thought of going near the worthy rector on a hunting day, and his Saturdays were, quite as a matter of course, devoted to sport. Very eagerly we used to scan the meets of Mr. Cradock's hounds (now the Zetland) for a Saturday meet within riding distance, and if they met about Hamsterley, or anywhere within a few miles of Witton-le-Wear we used to join forces at High Stoop, and have at least a morning with these hounds. The unfortunate thing for us was that Mr. Cradock's hounds always began at the outside of their draw, and went down country for their afternoon fox. Also, foxes found about Hamsterley seemed to have a knack of going anywhere but in our direction; but I remember on one occasion a very nice hunting run which began at Brussleton, and which, after covering a lot of country in nearly three hours, was ended by a fox going into a drain just by the gate of Witton Castle, and this meant that we could get home in a little over an hour. Twice during this season I went to meets of the Durham County in the Sedgefield country with my father, but on the second occasion I jumped a fence on to a plough, which was hidden, and lamed my pony badly. Luckily this happened at the end of the season, but I remember the circumstance well because of two things. First, this pony, said to be by Sweetmeat, and most certainly thoroughbred, was the best pony I ever rode, being almost of polo size and very fast, and, secondly, when I had got the pony into a farmer's stable, and the farmer had kindly administered first aid, I had to walk some seven miles, from the neighbourhood of Great Stainton to Darlington, before I found a veterinary surgeon

to send out to the farm. I have said that the Wolsingham harriers and the Durham beagles kept us going when the fox-hounds were at the other side of the country, but during the particular season I have in mind Colonel Hawkes and Mr. Fred Lamb were joint Masters of the Newcastle and Gateshead harriers, and on at least three occasions these hounds were brought to High Woodside Farm overnight and were often kept for a second day. High Woodside is situated in a delectable hare hunting country about two and a half miles east of Lanchester, and hounds would meet there one day, and at Newbiggen or Harbuck on the next, and between the two hunts there would be a gathering of the clans at Woodside Farm, and much festivity. The farmer was one of the right sort, and the best singer of "A southerly wind and a cloudy sky" I ever heard, and in order that his hospitality should not be too severely taxed, it was customary to send him a hamper of wine, and another of game, and so forth when he was threatened with a supper visitation. The joint Masters of the pack and other congenial spirits would be located at some of the neighbouring houses, but they all met at Woodside Farm about seven o'clock for a sort of picnic dinner—which always ended with songs and toasts.

For some seasons the Durham County were a four days a week pack, but this was in the middle of the last century. I do not think they ever advertised four days in my recollection, though at times bye days were frequent. Mondays was for the west of the country, and three days out of four the meet was at Browney Bank. Wednesday meets were always on the east side of the Wear, about the coast from Silksworth to Castle Eden, and round about Shadforth and Elemore, and Friday was in the centre of the hunt, but almost invariably on the north side of the river Wear. The Brancepeth country was hunted on Fridays as a rule, and the country about Red House Gill and north as far as Lambton, and also the country round Sacriston and Holmside. Lanchester was a Monday meet, but the first draw was the long-defunct whin at Boggle Hole, and if that failed hounds were generally taken westwards. Witton Gilbert, only four miles from Durham, was at times a Monday meet, and would be advertised with the addition of "for Hill Top," and this meant

drawing west. On a Friday Witton Gilbert "for Langley" would be advertised, and this meant Sacriston, Nursingfield, and so forth. At the time I am writing of fields with the Durham County were very large compared with what they have since been. I was not often enough on the Sedgfield side of the country to be certain as to the numbers there, but when I did go—and a few years later I was there many times—the crowd was a large one. But it is of the Durham side that I can speak with knowledge, and I may explain that there were hunting people in nearly every country house between the city and the northern border of the hunt fourteen miles away, and many others from the neighbourhood of Chester-le-Street. There would be, at a low computation, five-and-twenty scarlets at a Browney Bank meet, but scarlet was, perhaps, more generally worn than it now is—at least in this particular country. Then, too, Mr. Harvey was a Newcastle man, and had a big following from his native town. Lanchester is thirteen miles from Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Chester-le-Street eight miles from the same place, and as far as my recollection goes the biggest musters were at Chester Bar and Plawsworth Bar, both on the old coach road between Durham and Newcastle. Horses used to be sent to Lanchester overnight for Browney Bank meets, and their owners would drive the fifteen miles to the covert in the morning, except Mr. Harvey, who always hacked the full distance. In 1863 the Durham to Consett railway was opened, and it was possible to box to Lanchester or Knitsley, but this involved a change at Durham for those coming from Newcastle or Sunderland, and though horses were sent by this route the hunting men usually held to the road. Three or four years later the railway was extended from Consett to Newcastle, and there was a handy train which left Newcastle a little before ten and brought hunting men and their horses to within a quarter of a mile of a Knitsley meet, or into Lanchester just at the right time.

If hounds were at Browney Bank a little law would be allowed for the train contingent, and Knitsley became a favourite meeting place, and has remained so to this day. I have seen as many as seven horse boxes on this train while Mr. Harvey was in office, and four or five was a very usual



number. I have even known hunting men use this train for a Witton Gilbert meet, and to be unboxing while hounds were hunting a fox in Hill Top covert, but Hill Top was a quick find, and the risk of being left very great, so the custom never became general. Witton Gilbert, it should be explained, is the station south of Lanchester and four miles away, and the train was quite ten minutes later in arriving there. Why it should have been the case that almost every house in the country districts of North Durham contained hunting people two generations ago and why an almost exactly opposite state of affairs prevails at the present moment is one of those curious facts which occasionally present themselves and can hardly be explained, but it is none the less true, and thus it is that fields in this particular country are in these days hardly a fourth the size of those I first knew. But beyond the absence of hunting people from a number of country houses there are two other reasons, one of which is that after Mr. Harvey's retirement much of his following turned to the Tynedale and Morpeth for sport, and the other that Sunderland hunting people now go to the Zetland and the South Durham more frequently than to the North Durham. This is greatly due to the fact that the trains between Sunderland and Lanchester are most inconvenient from a hunting point of view, while to the two hunts further south they are so numerous that if one is missed another can be utilised. A third reason is that whereas a great number of hunting people were resident in Newcastle and its suburbs during Mr. Harvey's mastership, many of the hunting folk who are connected with the commercialism of Newcastle now live in the Tyne Valley, and the upshot is that the Tynedale fields are very considerably larger than those I can first remember, while in the Braes of Derwent country the increase has been even more marked, so much so, indeed, that I have counted 120 riders at a meet which I can remember attended by half a dozen only. But the western country of the North Durham is as good as ever it was from a scenting point of view; it contains very little wire, and if there are not so many foxes as there were when hounds met so frequently at Browney Bank there are still quite enough for sport, for there were far too many some years ago,

and this is proved by the fact that Mr. Rogerson has killed more than any of his predecessors did because he did not change so frequently. Time was when it was almost impossible to run a fox into any of dozens of North Durham coverts without putting up fresh foxes, and on this point Mr. Maynard used to enlarge at length and at times would only have a very small tract of country stopped. "Shall I stop for your Lanchester meet on Monday?" would be asked. "Certainly not; there are far too many foxes above ground every Monday," he would say, and would chance running to ground. Now Mr. Rogerson often has ten miles of country stopped, but I am inclined to think he and his partner, Capt. Frank Bell, find just about the desirable number of foxes, for they are not so bothered with frequent changes.

Mr. Anthony Maynard's mastership of the North Durham, which extended over a period of twelve seasons, was a singularly happy one, first-rate sport being the rule rather than the exception from the first to the last season of the twelve. Mr. Maynard, who owned property at Skiningrove, not far from the Yorkshire coast, between Saltburn and Whitby, had been hunting all his life, chiefly with the Cleveland, the Hurworth, the Duke of Cleveland's (afterwards Mr. Cradock's, and now the Zetland). He was a fine judge of a hunter, being, in fact, almost world renowned in that capacity, for he judged at the Dublin Show when a very young man, and continued to officiate there, from time to time, until he was well advanced in years. He judged also at all the most important shows in the kingdom, and it was frequently said that his decisions were very seldom upset by other judges. He was not a young man, as far as years are concerned, when he came to Newton Hall, but when he took the North Durham he was physically the youngest man of his age we ever knew, and he had the spirits of a boy, and extraordinary enthusiasm for everything connected with horse and hound. He was a cheery optimist, in fact, and a rare sportsman, with very great knowledge of hunting, and he quickly became immensely popular in the North Durham. Indeed, he was hardly looked upon as a stranger, for the first Mrs. Maynard was a Wilkinson, of Harperley, in the North Durham country, while his second wife was a daughter of Canon Ridley, of



Durham, and a cousin of Lord Ridley. It need hardly be said then that Mr. Maynard had some acquaintance with the country, especially the centre of it west of Durham, but the northern part he did not know, and I have a lively recollection of showing him the coverts in the extreme north of the hunt shortly before his first season commenced. He drove out from Newton Hall to Browney Bank, where I met him, and during a long summer afternoon I not only showed him all the coverts within a considerable distance of that place, but introduced him to many of the farmers. With these same farmers he quickly became a great favourite, and before he had completed his first season he probably knew a very great majority of those who farmed the land within the confines of the hunt. I may add that Mr. Maynard was a large and highly successful farmer himself, and if I recollect rightly he had some 600 acres of mixed land in his own hands round about Newton Hall, and I also remember that he had a big local reputation as a feeder of fat stock, who often secured the top prizes at the Christmas auctions. But it is Mr. Maynard's hunting that I have to do with now, and I must admit to having felt great admiration for his methods, as soon as I came to understand them, which was not until he had held office for at least two seasons. Indeed, between 1868 and 1873 I did not see much of the Durham country, but had made acquaintance with many other packs, notably the Ledbury, Lord Coventry's (now the Croome), the Worcestershire and North Herefordshire, Heythrop, Bicester, Old Berks, and South Oxfordshire. I had had four full seasons divided among these eight packs, and I had seen many other packs on odd days, and as I had been "taking stock" all the time I think I may say, with all modesty, that I was in a position to understand and appreciate the style in which Mr. Maynard was hunting the country. His hounds, to begin with, were to a great extent a scratch pack, for dumb madness had visited the pack shortly before the division of country was made, and though drafts had been sent as free gifts from many Masters, the pack was a scratch one in the sense that it had not been bred in North Durham. The kennels were at Newton Hall (Mr. Maynard's residence), and the Master at once began to breed hounds, and very soon had

a good working pack, in which there was plenty of first-rate blood from high-class kennels, to say nothing of a strain of Welsh blood introduced, I think, by Captain Apperley. The gentleman just referred to, by the way, acted as huntsman for three months or so, one season, when Haverson, the professional huntsman, had broken his leg. At exactly what period this occurred I do not remember, but it was, I think, about the middle 'seventies, and I was out of the country most of the time, but recollect a first-rate day from Lord Bute's, and another in the Cornsay country. Captain Apperley, who had hunted harriers, otter hounds, and fox-hounds also, I believe, in Wales, was a born huntsman, and showed excellent sport. He was for many years secretary of the hunt.

In 1884 Mr. Maynard resigned, and for the next four seasons the hunt was managed by a committee of four, Richard Freeman, who had followed Haverson as huntsman during Mr. Maynard's last two seasons, continuing to carry the horn. Mr. Maynard was one of the original committee, the others being Lord Durham, the late Mr. (afterwards Sir) Lindsay Wood, and the late Mr. George Taylor Smith. There were changes during the four years, and for a season or two the late Mr. H. Chapman, of Silksworth, represented the Sunderland side of the country. For a time things worked well, but the fields gradually fell off in size, and this was due, not to a lack of good sport, but because several very prominent hunting men had died, while one or two others were giving up hunting on account of increasing years. Fields, it should be mentioned, were very good throughout Mr. Maynard's mastership. It is true that the Newcastle-on-Tyne contingent rather fell away, though at odd times there would be a big visitation on a Monday, caused in a great measure by the fact that the Tynedale were meeting in the Capheaton and Kirkheaton district, twenty miles or so from Newcastle, and with no railway very near it. At such times, if the North Durham were near Knitsley or Lanchester there would be many horse boxes on the morning train from Newcastle, and a cheery meeting among many old hunting friends. But while Newcastle was not on the whole so well represented in the North Durham as it had been when

Mr. Harvey was Master, there was throughout Mr. Maynard's mastership a largely increased attendance from the Sunderland side of the country, and this continued through the committee period, and has not altogether ceased, though, as I have explained, the Zetland and the South Durham are now much more handy for the Sunderland division. What Mr. Maynard found when he came was a resident population of foxhunters, and what Mr. Rogerson had to face when he took hold—after the committee period was over—in 1888, was a lot of big houses, either empty, or with few hunting people living in them. Still, the good fields continued, for a fair amount of fresh blood had joined the hunt, and there were always the “young 'uns coming on,” to say nothing of a steady increase in the number of hunting ladies. There was, after a time, a falling off on the east side of the country, as a matter of course, for when certain parts of the country were given up, so few meets were within riding distance of many of the hunting folk that they were obliged to hunt by train, and this meant that packs which afforded a better train service were preferred to the North Durham. The increase of industrialism was the real cause of this state of affairs, but now the hunting areas are very definitely marked, and attempt is seldom made to take hounds where there is a network of railways, or a plethora of colliery villages. After Mr. Maynard resigned fresh kennels were requisitioned at Viewley Grange, on the Southill estate, owned by Colonel H. T. Fenwick, and Mr. Rogerson continued to use these kennels until 1906, when he built new kennels on his own property at Mount Oswald. The Viewley Grange kennels were rather too far north of all the most used country, and too far from the Master's residence, which is on the south side of Durham. Curiously enough, the new kennels are so near the old northern kennel of the Durham County pack that the same house in which Dowdeswell lived is used by the present kennel huntsman. In 1906 Freeman retired, and since then Mr. Rogerson carried the horn, until, on account of his many duties in connection with the war, he was obliged to surrender his task to Hepple, who had been kennel huntsman during the previous season. Mr. Rogerson's long mastership has been a most successful one, during which a fine standard of sport has been

maintained, except during a period of two or three seasons when mange played havoc with the country. All the northern packs were visited in turn by this terrible disease, but from what I saw and heard I think the North Durham suffered most, and for a time it was odds of 10 to 1 that every fox followed by hounds was mangy. For Mr. Rogerson and his staff the state of affairs was most exasperating, but they battled on in dogged fashion, putting down all the mangy foxes they could kill, destroying old earths, and bringing in new blood when a suitable place could be found; Norwegian foxes, perhaps of a rather bigger type than the original foxes of the district, were imported, and after a year or two these seemed to strengthen and improve, and at the present day North Durham foxes are probably as good as can be found in any part of the kingdom. In 1919 Capt. Frank Bell joined Mr. Rogerson in the mastership, and for the last two seasons has acted as huntsman to the pack.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BRAES OF DERWENT COUNTRY.

During the greater part of Mr. Rogerson's mastership of the North Durham—since 1896, to be exact—Mr. Lewis Priestman has been Master of the Braes of Derwent hounds, which, as has been explained, join the North Durham on its northern boundary. Time was when the two hunts were very separate and distinct affairs, each having its own field, and neither going very frequently over its own border. But during the last twenty years there has been a gradual but steady increase of general interest between the two hunts, caused by members of each hunt hunting constantly with the other. The two establishments are of course quite distinct, and the boundaries of the two hunts well defined; but as many as two-thirds of the North Durham field are very regular in their attendance at the Saturday meets of the Braes of Derwent, and the Master and other members of the last-mentioned pack rarely miss a North Durham Monday. It is only when the North Durham are on the south side of the Wear or the Braes of Derwent in their Blaydon country that the field is not composed of people living in either country, and, as a matter of fact, most of the hunting people between the Wear and the Tyne are now members of both hunts. The two Masters have been friends from boyhood, and motor-cars and increased train services have so facilitated matters that it is quite simple to reach meets of hounds that were a generation ago almost impossible. Then, again, either pack runs more frequently into the other's country than was formerly the case; and this is perhaps rather difficult to understand, but is nevertheless a fact. I can remember a season in which I never missed a Monday with the North Durham, and never saw them over their northern boundary, and I can remember another, about the same period of time, in which they ran once to the Pont from Gladdow. More recently I have seen the Braes of Derwent



go well into North Durham country five or six times in a season, and the longest point I ever saw with the North Durham took hounds right across the Braes of Derwent country into the Haydon country beyond. Of course, there may have been many incursions on the part of one pack or the other when I was not present, or which I have forgotten; but the Braes of Derwent now hunt the western end of the Derwent valley much more frequently than they did in Colonel Cowen's time, and as most of the incursions begin in the Sneep district I have little doubt but that their increased number is greatly due to the fact that the chances of such incursions have been more than doubled owing to the greater number of westerly meets. These incursions of either pack are very popular, though five people out of every six who may be hunting when they take place are just as much at home in the invaded country as in the country left.

The Braes of Derwent country as regards its physical conditions is in many respects very different from its neighbour. It is perhaps in the lie of the land that the chief difference is to be found, for whereas all the best part of the North Durham is a high-lying semi-plateau, with innumerable small folds in the ground, the Braes of Derwent country is intersected by a backbone or ridge of hill, from which the ground slopes gradually to the Derwent on the south and to the Tyne on the north side. This ridge is about twenty miles in length, rising abruptly some four miles west of Newcastle-on-Tyne, just where the Derwent joins the Tyne, and continuing westwards until it is lost in the moorlands. The rise in the height of the ridge is very gradual, but in the centre of the country it reaches 1000 ft., and hereabouts the rivers are five and six miles away from the ridge, the intervening country consisting for the most part of pasture land, all on a gentle slope, and which is excellent scenting ground. Mr. Priestman's kennels are at Tinkler Hill, half a mile from Shotley Bridge, on the Durham side of the Derwent; but about nine-tenths of the hunting takes place in Northumberland, and yet the kennels are fairly well placed, no meet being more than about ten miles away. The fact is, the country is long in proportion to its width, for the hunting area has been gradually changed, and now hounds seldom



go far east and south of the river Derwent, whereas in earlier days they hunted a large tract of country which included Ravensworth, Tanfield, Beamish, and Urpeth, and which now contains too many collieries for sport, though in an ordinary way Mr. Priestman takes hounds to Beamish Hall once a year, and always finds foxes—which are difficult to hunt on account of the surroundings. Much of this country belonged at one time to the North Durham, and I have seen Mr. Maynard's hounds draw Ravensworth, Urpeth, and Beamish, and run to the Causey coverts near Tanfield; but some five and twenty years ago a passenger line from Birtley (on the main London and Edinburgh railway) to Consett was opened, and the Masters of the North Durham and Braes of Derwent agreed that this should be the boundary line between the two hunts. A hundred years ago all this country was part of Mr. Ralph Lambton's hunt, his northern kennels being in Lambton Park, not three miles from Urpeth, and foxes used to travel between Lambton and the immediate neighbourhood and the lower end of the Derwent valley. Indeed the late Mr. John Taylor Ramsey, who had seventy years' experience of hunting in this district, and who died a few years ago, when not far short of ninety years of age, used to tell me how he was blooded by Ralph Lambton in Axwell Park with a fox which had been brought from the neighbourhood of Penshaw, and was killed by the lake at Axwell. No doubt the country was entirely open in those pre-railway days, when the coal industry was in its infancy; but the face of the country has been greatly changed between the places named, though Mr. Rogerson only gave up drawing round about Penshaw a few years ago. Before describing the coverts and the present hunting area of the Braes of Derwent country it will perhaps be as well to say something as to the history of the pack, and I may at once state that an impenetrable veil of mystery surrounds the early hunting of the district. We know that a Mr. Humble, of Eltringham, had a trencher-fed pack of foxhounds towards the close of the eighteenth century, and we also know that a Mr. Humble was hunting the country when Sir Matthew White Ridley was hunting on the northern bank of the Tyne. Now, Sir Matthew's pack was, according to all available authorities, established in 1818, and he hunted

what are the Morpeth and Tynedale countries—or at least a considerable part of them. Nearly opposite Mr. Humble's house at Eltringham is a fine Tynedale covert, known as Horsley Wood, and Mr. Humble had been in the habit of taking his hounds there long before Sir Matthew had a pack of hounds. But Mr. Humble's hounds were trencher fed, and perhaps rather poorly supported. Anyhow, when an orthodox and smart hunting establishment was established north of the Tyne the landowners one and all transferred their allegiance to the new hunt, and Mr. Humble had to curtail his forays on what are now the Tynedale coverts. The story goes that Sir Matthew's hounds on one occasion drew Horsley Wood blank, and while hounds were drawing a gamekeeper informed the Master that the covert had been well routed out on the previous day by "the Eltringham dogs." Sir Matthew was very angry and as he reached the end of the covert where the field was gathered he saw Mr. Humble and opened on him in voluble language. For five minutes at least he poured forth a volley of abuse, and then stopped to take breath, when "Squire" Humble, as he was always called, took his pipe out of his mouth, and quietly observed, "Gan on, Sir Mattha" (local for Matthew), "gan on; I can bide a bit mair." The baronet's battery was completely spiked, as the field burst into a roar of laughter, and, as the polo people say, Humble rode off with all the honours of victory.

It is probable that after Mr. Humble's death there was a period in which the Braes of Derwent country was unhunted, for I can find no record of the Durham County pack travelling so far north, but they ran into it occasionally, and I believe most frequently between the Durham coverts at Greencroft and that part of the Derwent Valley which is known as the Pont Gill. But in 1837 a new pack, called the Prudhoe and Derwent Hounds, were established, and hunted the eastern part of the country for several seasons. How long this pack was in existence I am not sure, and I have never been able to find evidence of its doings after the year 1843. In that year Mr. Thomas Ramsay was Master, and he may have held on a year or two longer, but of that I am not certain. Some time during the forties there was a pack of foxhounds at Slaley, trencher fed, I believe, and they hunted what is now

the western part of the Braes of Derwent country, and a great deal of the present Haydon country.

Slaley is just within the present Haydon boundary, and it should be explained that the Haydon began as a harrier pack, and its records go back to 1809. I have, or had, a Haydon button which was engraved with the letters H. H. and a running hare, and this button was taken from a scarlet coat, with a stand-up collar, which had been originally worn by a member of the Lee family, of Land Ends, near Haydon Bridge, and it was thought that the coat had been made about 1830, or a little, but not more than a year or two, later. When the Haydon changed from hare to fox I do not know, but Mr. Nicholas Maughan, of Newbrough, was Master of the pack known as the Slaley prior to 1845, when he took over what is now the Tynedale country, of which he was the first Master. It should be further explained that Mr. Ralph Lambton's hounds were given up—owing to the ill-health of their owner—in 1838, and that for five or six seasons there was a hunt named the “Northumberland and North Durham,” of which Mr. Robertson, of Lees, was Master. Where exactly they hunted it is difficult to say, but all my inquiries go to prove that they were much more on the north than on the south side of the Tyne, and I have never heard that they hunted the Derwent Valley.\* Sir Matthew White Ridley, who had what are now the Tynedale and Morpeth countries, was, with his son, in office until 1844, and the Northumberland and Durham Hunt was dissolved a year later; but I believe Sir Matthew had given up or lent some of his country to the newcomer, who, it is just possible, also hunted that part of the North Durham which is nearest the sea, and is now unhunted because of the increased population.

What is pretty certain is that in the 'forties the Prudhoe and Derwent were hunting the small country which now forms the eastern part of the present Braes of Derwent country, and that when the Slaley pack were in existence the boundary of the two countries was the Watling Street, which crosses the Derwent at Ebchester and the Tyne at Corbridge,

---

\* It is explained farther on that this pack hunted in North Northumberland, and that their country included a portion of the County of Durham which was there located.

or possibly the Milkwell Burn, which rises on the ridge near Ash Tree, and reaches the Derwent a mile or so east of Ebchester. From the top of the ridge on its northern side another burn or brook has its spring, and reaches the Tyne near Wylam; and I have heard it argued that these two brooks, which to a great extent form the county boundary between Northumberland and Durham, were also the boundary of the two hunts. On the other hand, I have heard the late Mr. Thos. Ramsay say that he used to meet at Whittonstall, on the Watling Street, almost midway between the Tyne and Derwent, and also at Branch End, which is many miles west of Wylam. It is of little consequence now, and it is also quite certain that these hunts of between seventy and eighty years ago were not very particular as to their boundaries, for they were very primitive affairs as compared with present-day hunts, and in every way far more local than are the modern establishments. By this I mean that they were hardly heard of outside their own district, that their following was small and greatly composed of farmers, that they included no hunt clubs and did not always possess a committee, that they seldom advertised, that they hunted with many fewer hounds than is now considered orthodox, that they invaded each other's districts almost whenever it suited them, and that they knew or cared very little about the pomp and circumstance of the sport. But for all that they meant business, for the moving spirits were chiefly young men, many of whom were hunting regularly with more pretentious and better turned out packs, but who nevertheless found time to harry the foxes round their homes with what Surtees—perhaps very aptly described as a “cry of dogs.”

Mr. Thomas Ramsay—always called Tom—was quite a character, but more of a riding than a hunting man. I remember when I was a youngster hearing him described as “a devil to gallop and jump,” but from what I have heard he was not much of a hound man, and a veteran who used to hunt with him used to speak of his pack as being “of all sizes and shapes.” Mr. Ramsay was, however, a jovial man and a bit of a wag, and I was once present when he floored a “nut” of the period in fine style. The incident happened a great many years ago, long after Mr. Ramsay had given up

hunting, and at a time when he thought more of the gun than of horse or hound. He was then living at Sherburn Tower, and whenever he travelled on the local railway his company was eagerly sought by any of the youngsters who might be using the same train. On this particular occasion four or five of us were in a railway carriage in Newcastle station, and the train was on the point of starting when a tremendous swell, followed by a porter bearing luggage, arrived just in time to secure the only vacant seat. A perfect armoury of gun cases and other shooting paraphernalia were handed in and stowed away on the rack, and the train had hardly left the station before the newcomer gave tongue. He was affable to a degree, and though we were all strangers to him he at once fired off a volley of questions as to the locality, the shooting, and so forth. He was bound for the moors further up the line, and he had just left a Scotch moor, where—according to his own account—he had done wonderful things. Stories of his prowess were poured out in quick succession, and at last he told us how a day or two before he had bagged thirteen grouse with twelve cartridges. Mr. Ramsay sat in the corner, with a merry twinkle in his eye, and at last struck in: “That’s nothing,” he said, “nothing wonderful at least. I once had nine shots at the same hare, and never touched it, and that was thirty years ago, before most of you were born.” Our new friend rose like a fish to the bait. “Excuse me,” he said, “but thirty years ago there were only muzzle loaders, and if you did not touch the hare it would have been in the next parish before you were ready to fire again.” “That’s all you know about it,” replied Mr. Ramsay. “It was like this. I was standing in the corner of a field, and in front of me, about thirty yards away, there was a large haystack. After a while I saw a hare coming quietly along by the stack. I fired and missed, and loaded again, and the hare went out of sight. But she kept on cantering round the stack, and every *fifth* time she came past I had a shot and missed.” The story was received with roars of laughter, and was the last story told in that particular train that afternoon.

After Mr. Ramsay gave up the Prudhoe and Derwent hounds there was a break of ten or eleven years before the late Mr. William Cowen formed his pack, and it is questionable



whether the eastern end of the county was hunted at all regularly during this period. The Slaley hunted the north-west part of the district, more particularly the country about Healey and Minsteracres, and Mr. Maughan was Master of the pack, but, as has been explained, in the late 'forties he hunted a great deal of what is now the Tynedale country as well, and all the information I have been able to gather goes to suggest that though he paid a good deal of attention to the country south of the Tyne he seldom went east of the West Auckland turnpike, which crosses the Derwent at Allansford and reaches the Tyne at Corbridge. My father had much of his early hunting with Mr. Maughan, and he used to tell me that so much country was available it was impossible to hunt it all anything like fairly. I remember Mr. Maughan very well as a neat, horsey-looking man, not unlike Mr. John Harvey, of Durham, in his get-up and general appearance, and I have always heard that he was devoted to sport. It was a son of his who many years later was for a few seasons Master of the Haydon, and who had several disputes with the Tynedale about the boundaries of the two hunts. The fact is, that this boundary question was always a difficult one after there came to be more orthodox packs in the district, and the trouble probably arose because of Mr. Maughan taking over the Tynedale country, or a great part of it, when the Northumberland and North Durham Hunt was dissolved in 1845; while he at the same time retained and hunted the Slaley country. A hunting atlas, published in 1856, bears out my idea as to the Ebchester to Riding Mill-road being the boundary between the Slaley and the Prudhoe and Derwent, for in the year just named, when Mr. Maughan was Master of the Tynedale, and hunting occasionally in the Slaley district as well, the newly-formed Tynedale country, according to the map, included on the south of the Tyne all the western side of the present Braes of Derwent country and all the eastern end of the present Haydon country. Indeed, the boundary on the map is almost the line of the road—Riding Mill to Ebchester—and this map was published after and not before Mr. William Cowen established his pack. All the Shotley coverts and the Sneep are marked as Tynedale country in this map, but I never heard of the Tynedale drawing either of

the places just named. On the other hand, I have seen the Tynedale draw Minsteracres frequently, even during Mr. Straker's mastership, but not since Mr. Priestman took the Braes of Derwent. I have also seen the present Master of the Tynedale draw the Whin covert at Birken-side, which is actually in the Derwent Valley, and I have seen the Tynedale run to Broadoak, which is on the Derwent, a couple of miles east of the Ebchester to Riding Mill-road.

But leaving the boundary question for a moment, I must mention that for several seasons, in the late 'forties and early 'fifties, my father, the late Mr. J. B. Richardson, had a pack of foxhounds which were kennelled at Castleside, a mile south of Allansford, and which for some years had sport which varied a good deal but was at times brilliant. The pack, which never exceeded fifteen and was more often only twelve couples, was—curiously enough—first got together for the purpose of hunting wild roe-deer, which were then exceedingly numerous at the Sneep, Lord Bute's plantations and other big coverts in the Derwent Valley, and also on the Woodlands Estate, which, as the crow flies, is only two miles from Lord Bute's and about four from the Sneep. Deer used to travel between these various strongholds constantly, and there is still an odd one left, capable of giving a good deal of trouble when hounds take up his line in a big woodland. It was decided then that these deer should be hunted, and the Duke of Cleveland, with whose hounds Mr. Richardson frequently hunted, gave a draft of five or six couples, which was supplemented by odd couples from other kennels. But the deer received very little attention. They were difficult to find, and foxes were numerous, and it quickly became the custom to hunt the foxes and leave the deer to be shot. The hunt was a very private one; it never advertised, and had no very regular hunting days, because its chief supporters were hunting with other packs, while a good many of them were engaged in business. Besides Mr. Richardson, the late Colonel Hawkes, Mr. G. Hopper Burnett of Black Hedley, and the Bros. "Tom" and John Ramsay, were the most regular followers, and Mr. Surtees, the creator of Jorrocks, used to look on, mounted on a cob, but seldom took part in a run. Then there was a Yorkshireman named

George Maw, who for some years lived at Riddlehamhope, west of Blanchland, and he not only never missed a day with these hounds, but looked after stopping all the length of the Derwent Valley from the Sneep to his own place of residence, and was a sort of right-hand man to the hunt. This Mr. Maw was a very hard man across country, who rode thoroughbred cast-offs from the racecourse, and I remember when I was a very small boy being shown certain high walls he had jumped on Black Hedley farm, and thinking what a hero he must have been.

The "Castleside Dogs," as they were spoken of locally, doubtless furnished the talented author of *Jorrocks* with many ideas, but I am very strongly of opinion that nearly all of Surtees's best characters were of the composite order, that he took a certain peculiarity from one man, another trait from another man, and so forth, and that even in the matter of his many descriptions of costume he pursued the same line of action. It has, however, been an article of faith in the Derwent Valley for sixty years or more that Joseph—"Jos." Kirk he was always called—supplied a great deal of the general make-up of James Pigg. Kirk was a blacksmith by trade, but endowed with an extraordinary love of hunting. He was also a very determined horseman, who knew no fear, but he was hard on his mounts, and had no idea of saving them. He acted as huntsman to the Castleside pack, and certain stories are to be found about him and the Master, Mr. Richardson, in *Hunting in the Olden Times*, by W. Scarth Dixon. Whether Kirk was ever in the employ of Mr. Surtees I have never been able to find out, but I should explain that for a period after he came into the Hamsterley estate Mr. Surtees had a pack of harriers, with which he hunted the neighbourhood of his home. Hamsterley Hall is situated in the Derwent Valley, rather less than four miles from the present Braes of Derwent kennels and about double the distance from Castleside, and Mr. Surtees was living there and writing throughout the whole existence of the Castleside pack. But earlier in the eighteenth century a Mr. Brewis, who lived at the Hag, now part of the Hamsterley estate, also had a pack of harriers, and Mr. Richardson always had an idea that Kirk had been in his employ. Kirk was not by any means a young man when he

was at Castleside, and soon after the hounds were given up he left the district and was supposed to have gone back to Newcastle from which place he originally came. Some years ago an effort to trace him was made, but no trustworthy information was forthcoming, but it is almost certain that he had no further engagement in connection with hunting. Anyhow, he used many of the sayings which are put into Pigg's mouth by Surtees, and it will be remembered that when he (Pigg) makes his first appearance in the novel, *Handley Cross*, he speaks of having hunted with "Tynedale and D'orm (Durham) and Horworth and all." It is said that when Kirk lived at Castleside, which is within a mile of the Durham border he got a great deal of hunting with the Durham County—that he would be riding a farmer's three-year-old one day, a cart-horse the next, and an old pony on the third, and that, when he could not raise a horse, he hunted all day on foot, and was, as Surtees wrote of Romford, "a capital hand across country, whether on foot or on horseback."

While I am on the subject of Surtees I may allude to some recent correspondence which has lately appeared concerning him in a weekly contemporary. The question of the whereabouts of Handley Cross Spa has been discussed, and Leamington, Cheltenham, and other places have been mentioned, and more especially Croft. Probably the real fact is that the author indulged in a combination just as he used half a dozen people to make up one of his characters; but of one thing I am almost sure, and that is that he never disclosed his originals, either of men or places. He was latterly a somewhat silent man, and at no time was he what he would have called a "babbler." His conversational powers were chiefly reserved for paper, and I remember, when quite a youngster (about five years old), how he took me on to his knee at a hunt breakfast, but said nothing, and there I sat, not liking to move, but wanting to go to the hounds outside. And *apropos* the Croft theory, one of the recent letters was from Charles Fox, who was huntsman to the Blackmore Vale from 1890 to 1897, and who says that, when he was whipping-in to the Hurworth, some years before, Mr. Surtees used to come there not to hunt but to fish in the Tees. With all due deference, I think this story is probably wrong. In the

first place, Mr. Surtees died in 1864, fifty-eight years ago, and though I am not certain about it, I imagine Fox's service with the Hurworth was at a later date. Croft is on the Yorkshire side of the Tees, Hamsterley on the extreme north of the county of Durham, some of the Surtees property being in Northumberland and yet only a mile or two away. And as there are other families of Surtees in South Durham, I think it probable that it was another Mr. Surtees which Fox remembers. The name of "Handley Cross" is taken from the Hamsterley estate, there being to this day a high bridge over a brook, between the lodge and the house, which was always called Handley Cross Bridge. The one character one knows of in Surtees's book which was actually drawn from a single man was that of "Independent Jimmy," in Romford's hounds. He was a man who drove a two-horse covered waggonette between Newcastle-on-Tyne and Shotley Bridge, before the railway was made. The 'bus passed the Hamsterley lodge every day, and its driver was on the road many years after Surtees died, and was absolutely true to the description. Even the story told in connection with Mr. Stotfold's staghounds was practically true, for the 'bus driver—whose name was either Bell or Brown—did actually take one of his horses and join in a hunt, leaving three market women sitting in his 'bus, to which he returned an hour and a half later, and calmly resumed his journey. Another character who has his original in the Derwent Valley was Mr. "Jogglebury Crowdey," who was Surtees's own tenant at Milkwell Burn. This worthy, whose name I have forgotten, was half-gentleman, half-farmer, and was constantly in trouble for trespassing after "gibby sticks." His costume, as he appeared in *Sponge's Sporting Tour*, was exactly reproduced from life, and also his "puff, blow, wheeze." He followed hounds for the purpose of stick hunting, and there was a constant trespass feud between him and the Government official who resided at Chopwell House, in Chopwell Wood, a 1200-acre plantation, owned by the Crown, and undoubtedly the original of Pinch Me Near Forest. The description of Pinch Me Near in *Handley Cross* exactly tallies with the real Chopwell, and with such material at hand it is hardly likely that the author would go elsewhere when he wanted to describe



a forest, owned by the Crown, and administered by an official who had an enormous opinion of himself. It would be possible to name many people who afforded Surtees some of the peculiarities of a number of his best-known characters, and among these there would not be a single name which has appeared in the recent correspondence, but, as I have already mentioned, it is any reasonable odds that all the best figures in the series of novels were of compound character, and my views would merely be those which were adopted by residents of the locality in which Surtees lived at the time the novels were published. About the Spa I may say that in the 'thirties of the last century Shotley Spa was opened, a hotel built, and some attempt made to establish an inland watering place. It came to little, however, but that Surtees got his idea of a spa from that fact is exceedingly probable. Also it is probable that many of the scenes described in connection with Jorrocks had a local original, and notably the run to Ongar Castle, for the bath scene is said to have taken place at Seaton Delaval, on the Northumberland coast, and less than twenty miles from Hamsterley, and there is a legend that hounds—what hounds I do not know—ran from the Derwent Valley to the Tyne, crossed the river, and ran to the sea at the very place.

The Castleside pack had plenty of country—more, indeed, than they could hunt properly, considering how small the establishment was. They could go west as far as the moors, and by arrangement they drew the Woodlands coverts, Lord Bute's, Sheepwalks, and other places in the Durham County hunt during the three alternate weeks that the county pack were at Sedgefield. Mr. Richardson used to speak of having had the best sport from Sheepwalks, and no doubt this portion of the Durham hunt was then very wild and open and full of foxes. Wire fencing was unknown and foxes were held sacred by the farmers, who dearly loved a hunt. Many of the best coverts—and the shooting at Lord Bute's for a long period—were owned by Mr. Richardson's father, who then occasionally resided at Woodlands, so there was no trouble about stopping. All the same, the two best hunts which occurred during the life of the pack both had their beginning in the Derwent Valley. The first of these began at the Sneepe, and hounds actually ran to the steep hill above Hexham, where they

checked in a garden, and where Kirk, off his horse and looking for his fox, encountered the owner of the garden and had a rough-and-tumble sort of scrap with him. This incident, it has always been understood, was the foundation of the Pigg and the melon-frame story in *Handley Cross*, and there is every probability of its being true. But, curiously enough, the hunt was not at an end, for while the altercation was in progress the fox was seen creeping up the hill behind the garden, and hounds actually ran right back to the Sneep. On the outward journey they went by Espershields, and thence near Slaley, and on to Swallowfield, and over the hill to Hexham. On the return journey they again went through Swallowfield, and then over Corbridge Fell, and so to Minister-acres and the Sneep. The fox avoided Dipton, the biggest covert in the country, and from the fact that he went right back to where he was originally found it is only reasonable to assume that there was no change. Still, the distance is very great, with an eleven-mile point each way, but the pace was never great, and—I have been told—there were fewer foxes at the time north of the Derwent than there were on the south side. Mr. Richardson used to say that in the late 'forties and 'fifties the Derwent Valley was stuffed full of foxes, but they were difficult to find on the higher ground near Minister-acres and Kellas. The Sneep was, as it is now, a great stronghold, and so also were the coverts near Blanchland. The hunt I have just described is, I find, mentioned in *Hunting in the Olden Days*, and so are two others, which I do not remember to have heard of, but the other great hunt I have in mind is not referred to in Mr. Scarth Dixon's book, and I wrote down the particulars when I heard the story some years ago from my father himself.

I always knew vaguely of this run which the late Mr. Matthew Kearney of the Ford was fond of describing, and the description he used to give tallied almost exactly with Mr. Richardson's own account, but the latter used to say that Mr. Kearney only joined in half-way. The run in question took place in 1856, or the following year, after a meet at Shotley Lodge, where Mr. Richardson then resided, and where the present kennels are situated. Now there is a building estate half a mile south of the house, and a hill behind,

where there are many rows of cottages. Sixty years ago there was a single farmhouse where there is now a big population, and it was all plain sailing over the top of the ridge between Medomsley and Consett, where, indeed, there were heather-covered fields and larch plantations, and which were still in existence when I was a boy. There is, just above the present kennels, a long, narrow gill, which then was almost a mile in length, and was called Whiteside Plantation. The name is lost now, and much of the plantation disappeared when the branch line from Newcastle to Consett was made in the 'sixties; but the gill, before the railway workers came, was a sure find, and on the occasion referred to hounds found in it, and went over Berry Edge farm to Bunker's Hill, where they checked for some time. Indeed, they were on the point of going back to the covert, which had only been half drawn, when a single hound was seen a quarter of a mile in front. The pack were taken on, and ran to Boggle Hole, in the Durham country, whence they bore right-handed over the valley of the Smallhope to Newbiggen. They then crossed the since frequently used point-to-point course diagonally, and ran by the Roman encampment to Holly Bush, then a young gorse covert. They did not stop here, but went by Hamsteels, under the hill at Esh, and on to Hill Top, which, in those days, was not only a strong covert but had a big gorse on its western side. There was some delay here, but hounds got through the gorse and the wood beyond, and, going on faster than before, ran to the outskirts of Durham, killing their fox at Western Hill, a bare half-mile from the cathedral. Mr. Richardson used to say that the pace from Bunker's Hill to Holly Bush was good, that they went very slowly, picking it out field by field between Holly Bush and Hill Top, and then went a cracker to the end. He also used to add that before they had broken the fox up more people had arrived than had been with him at the start. It happened to be a very fine day, and nearly seventy years ago on any fine day lots of people would be riding about the country, and throughout the hunt they were constantly joined by the local population who had not been at the meet. From Shotley Bridge, half a mile from the scene of the find, to Durham is fourteen miles by a road which, in parts, follows the Watling-street, and which is very

straight all the way. Hounds were never more than two miles away from the road, and the point is just over twelve miles, while the country from the high ground at Berry Edge was, at that time—before there was a single colliery or a single line of rails in the Lanchester valley—capital riding-ground, three-quarters at least being grass, and the rest arable. Only three coverts were touched, Boggle Hole, Holly Bush, and Hill Top, and the two first-named are very small places, while Hill Top perhaps extends over thirty acres. About the time I have no information, and if it was taken it has long been forgotten, nor did the hunt ever find its way into print. But in my young days it was still being talked of when good runs were under discussion, and the late Mr. Edward Waldy, of Barmpton, near Darlington, who was staying at Shotley Lodge at the time, used to speak of it as “about the best thing he ever saw.”

About the “Castleside dogs” I have little more to say. From all the accounts which I used to hear they had plenty of fun for several seasons, and they were lucky in having a country in which there was little game preservation, except on the moors, next to no population, and some half-dozen enthusiasts to keep the game going. The forfeited Derwent-water estates, which covered a great deal of the country, had not then been broken up and sold, and there was also the Crown land about Chopwell. Further west a great deal of good country, with many coverts, was owned by the Dean and Chapter of Durham, or by Lord Crewe’s trustees, which estates now belong to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The latter body, like their predecessors, are equally well disposed towards sport, and this Mr. Priestman has found during his six and twenty years of mastership. I may perhaps be allowed to quote a footnote which is to be found on page 360 of *Hunting in Olden Days*, which is as follows:—

“Stephen Goodall jumped in and out of the railway gates when with the Bramham Moor, and another fine jumping performance was that of the late Mr. Jonathan Richardson, who jumped in and out of a sheepfold at Stagshaw Bank. The walls were 5 ft. and 5 ft. 3 in. high, and the top courses were mortared. . . .”

In 1854 a new hunt was formed in the Derwent Valley by

the late Mr. William Cowen, a son of Sir Joseph Cowen, and brother of the well-known politician, Mr. Joseph Cowen, and of Colonel John Cowen, who succeeded his brother as Master. All the brothers have been dead for a long period of time, but for forty years two of them kept the country going on an almost nominal subscription, and enjoyed such popularity as is not always vouchsafed to a Master of Hounds. Mr. William Cowen held office from 1854 to 1868, and Colonel Cowen from his brother's resignation until 1895, and for the greater part of the time the kennels were at Coal Burns, which is towards the eastern end of the ridge which divides the Tyne and Derwent valleys, and very central for the lower or Newcastle end of the country, but which involved long journeys to the western meets. Mr. William Cowen was a very keen sportsman, who kept racehorses and greyhounds as well as foxhounds, and who will be remembered by turfites as the owner of the first Ladas, which horse he sold to Lord Rosebery, then an Oxford undergraduate, for a large sum. The horse did not fulfil expectations, but his original owner was not to blame for that, nor had he overrated the colt's abilities as a two year old. I remember William Cowen well. He was a remarkably handsome man, and in hunting clothes suggested the type which is to be found in Herring's later hunting scenes. He was tall and a biggish weight, but got over a country in fine style, and was terribly keen on hunting. What country exactly he hunted on the north-western side of the present Braes of Derwent country I hardly know, for the Tynedale used to come at times to Minsteracres and Healey throughout all the Cowen period, and in point of fact they were the real possessors of this part of the country, as successors to the Slaley hunt. But their visits were mostly paid in the cubhunting period, and during the spring of the year, and it is a fact that Mr. Cowen's hounds did very little cubhunting at any time, and practically none during the later years of Colonel Cowen's mastership. But there was never any question about the district west of Shotley Bridge, for though the map of 1856 made it Tynedale country, that pack never came there, whereas Mr. William Cowen was constantly at the Sneep, meeting either at Greenhead or Allansford for the chain of coverts which extend from the place just named



almost to Eddy's Bridge. My early recollections take me back to a meet of "Mr. Cowen's hounds"—they were not called Braes of Derwent until Colonel Cowen became Master—at Shotley Lodge, and to another meet about the same time at Allansford. I scrambled after the pack on a small pony when very young, but throughout my boyhood I saw far more of the Durham country from Woodlands than I ever did of Mr. Cowen's hounds, except in the season of 1867-8, when I had several good hunts with them. As for the fields, or, rather, the size of the fields, I do not remember much, but I am of the opinion that during both the Cowen masterships there were many more followers at the eastern end of the hunt than there were in the west, and that the meets in the Blaydon country, which is within an easy ride of Newcastle-on-Tyne, were most largely attended. In Colonel Cowen's time I know this was so, and it is perhaps a little curious, because now the reverse is the case, the big fields with the present pack being nearly always in evidence when they meet near Shotley Bridge or in the Tyne Valley. It is the case, however, that during the Cowen masterships hounds were as a general rule in the east on Saturday and in the west part of their country on Wednesday, and Saturday is quite the most popular hunting day in that part of the world, more especially among the business men, who form a great part of these northern fields. That the rule of hunting in the west in the middle of the week was always strictly adhered to was not, however, the case, and I remember certain good Saturdays in the Allansford district during the earlier part of Colonel Cowen's mastership, and notably it was on a Saturday that hounds ran to Broom-shields from the Sneep, unattended, as I have already described.

There was always a good deal of festivity in connection with Colonel Cowen's hounds, and at some lawn meets, especially in the eastern end of the country, there would be a big whip up of members of other hunts. The Master's house, Blaydon Burn, was the most popular fixture, and at times the Tyne-dale, North Durham, and Mr. Lamb's Harriers would be as well represented as the Braes of Derwent was. Once I remember Mr. Maynard and a large number of the North Durham field being present, but what the special occasion

was I have forgotten, nor do I think that sport on that day was out of the ordinary. And here I must explain that I was never by any means a regular follower of the pack in Colonel Cowen's time, for when I was in the district I hunted in the Durham country as frequently as possible, the days of the last-named pack suiting me better, and also the fact that I was well within reach of all the best of the North Durham, and had been, so to speak, entered in that country. All the same, I saw a good deal of fun at odd times with the Braes of Derwent, especially during the middle period of Colonel Cowen's mastership, and it is my aim to deal as much as possible with incidents at which I was present. I may perhaps be allowed to mention one or two days with Colonel Cowen which I shall never forget. One of these was a hunt I had all by myself, and which was, indeed, one of the best hunts I ever saw in the country. I was never a jealous man to hounds, and I have always regretted that I had no company in this particular hunt, but my having it all to myself was purely accidental. Hounds met at Priestfield (where there was a breakfast) and were put into the Pont Gill from the eastern side. As is usual at the Pont, they found quickly, and went up the Gill, the large field, which included several strangers, going up with them, but outside the Gill. Personally I always preferred to be on the Hamsterley side of this covert, and crossed the Gill. After a time hounds divided, and about twelve couples took a fox over to what is now called the Chimney Wood, adjoining Hamsterley Hall. I shouted for all I was worth, but the rest of the pack were running another fox in the main Pont Gill, and no one came. I then went in pursuit, caught hounds up at Long Close Gate, and crossed the river behind them at the Derwentcote ford. Going on fast, they skirted Milkwell Burn and went north of Ravenside, and over the ridge just east of Hedley-on-the-Hill. They next ran over a fine bit of country to Hindley, where they checked in the garden at Hindley Hall. They hit it off of their own accord, and went over the pastures of Bromley Farm to Fotherley, going on by the latest used point to point course to North Kellas plantation. Hounds were not 200 yards in front of me when they went over the boundary wall of the plantation, and my heart sank, for

I thought I should either lose them in the big woodland or that they would change on to a fresh fox. They entered the cover just where a small stream crosses the Lead road, and there is a gate and a road into the wood 300 yards away. I was going for this gate when I heard the growling of hounds close to me, and, looking over the wall where the trees were very thick, I found that hounds had killed their fox. I left my horse in the lane and soon had the fox over the wall, and as hounds were trying to pull their victim from me, I put the dead fox over the horse's shoulder and quickly mounted again. Hounds, knowing their fox was there, came all round, and I rode down the lane to Scales Cross, then three miles further to Whittonstall, where I saw a gleam of scarlet, and met Master, huntsman, and a great number of the field, who were looking for hounds, but were a good deal wide of the line the fox had taken more than an hour before. The fox was broken up in a field adjoining the village of Whittonstall, and I had both brush and mask for many years. As far as my recollection goes, hounds never checked after crossing the Derwent until they reached Hindley, and when they had recovered the line they went steadily on. The pace was never very great except just at first, but there was a good holding scent from start to finish.

This run took place—I am almost certain—in January, 1875, and here I may leave Colonel Cowen for a moment to describe another fine hunt in which Hindley figured, and which took place a year or two later, but came from the other end of the country. And the hounds which gave the run were a draft from the North Durham Kennel, which was for the time being located at Riddlehamhope. The place just named, it should be explained, is a somewhat famous shooting box on the moors, a good five miles west of Blanchland, rather “extra parochial” as far as the Braes of Derwent or the Haydon hunt are concerned. Indeed, I imagine that Colonel Cowen never drew the coverts near it, but the keepers were complaining of the damage done to grouse by foxes, and the then shooting tenant, the late Mr. “Dicky” Johnson, of Sherburn Hall, arranged with Mr. Maynard that Captain Apperley should bring up some of the old hounds from the North Durham Kennel, hunt, and if possible kill some of these

foxes. This was in the early autumn of what particular year I do not remember, but some time in the 'seventies, nor have I any recollection of how Captain Apperley fared. What I do know is that I had a letter from John Greenwell one day, telling me he was going to have a hunt with these hounds, and asking me to go with him. We sent two horses on to Blanchland, drove there one afternoon, saw the keeper—I think there was no one at the shooting lodge that week—and arranged to be at Riddlehamhope at eight on the following morning.

Meantime we stayed all night at the popular Crewe Arms at Blanchland, and if my recollection is correct we arranged that one or two of the local farmers should join us in the morning. This same morning was very hot, and we drew the Triangle, Ellers Hill, and other coverts without finding. Hounds were then put into the Gill at Gibraltar, to draw down below Newbiggin House, and here they found and quickly reached Deborah Wood, where they divided—we had only six or seven couples—but after a time four and a half couples took a line out at the south end of the wood near the spot where there was once a lead mine. Going on southwards for a while, they did not quite reach the top of the hill, but turned towards Ruffside, and we followed them as best we could over the moor, hitting off the Shotley Bridge-Blanchland road about a mile west of Edmundbyers. There had been some ten or twelve horsemen—mostly hill farmers on ponies—with us when we started, but when we left Deborah Wood we had lost all our following except one farmer, and we had also lost about two couples of our very small pack. The nine hounds which went through this run were, however, very staunch, and though they frequently checked, and were cast by John Greenwell, who carried the horn, they kept worrying on the line throughout a long autumn day. Reaching the lower ground below Hunter House the fox travelled down the river (Derwent) side to Redwell Hall, and then turned up the hill to Manor House. Of course he was not being pressed, and could pick and choose his ground, and, curiously enough, he had undoubtedly a great liking for the open, and either did not know or cared little for the coverts. From Manor House we worked across to Shotley Field, and hounds ran through the top end of Walker Shank—near which place a flight of

rails which John Greenwell and I jumped, was still standing two or three years ago—and thence to Highfield and over the hill to Kipper Linn, where there was a long check, and we thought he must have got to ground in some rabbit holes. Hounds did not mark, however, but after a time hit off the line in the Gill below Lead Hill and hunted to Hindley, and into the big covert on Lord Allendale's property which lies between the Tyne and Broomley. If there was a change it took place here, for we got away on the Broomley side of the covert and went faster than we had gone all day to Fotherley Gill, where we slowed down again, but hounds recovered the line and carried it to Scales Cross and up the Minsteracres Dene to North Kellas, which we reached about dusk, and where we quickly lost hounds. John Greenwell had never been in Kellas in his life, and I knew very little about the covert, and, to cut a long story short, we were there for at least an hour after it was quite dark, and started to go back to Blanchland with only one of the nine hounds. Two or three more caught us up on our homeward ride, and we sat down to dinner terribly exalted over such a hunt, but rather uncomfortable about the lost hounds. After dinner we fell asleep on either side of the fire, but were soon roused up by a rush of excited individuals who poured into the room, all talking at once. It appeared that a "Dean and Chapter" woodman from Blanchland had been at a funeral at Corbridge, and had been walking home during the afternoon. Being a local man, he knew all the short cuts, and had come through the western part of South Kellas—where there is a cart road—on his way home, and in the corner of the plantation he had come upon three couples of hounds with their dead fox. Having heard of the projected hunt overnight he knew what hounds they were, and cut off the mask and brush and put them in his pocket. He then began his five to six miles walk, but he had already been from Blanchland to Corbridge and back to Kellas, a distance of well over twenty miles, and therefore he was very slow on the road. The next thing that happened was that the hounds, with the two or three which had joined us, were fed and fastened up in a stable, and that I helped to brew a huge bowl of punch, a liquor for which the Crewe Arms was then greatly famed.



This was the longest hunt I ever saw in my life, and the marvellous part of it was that so small a number of hounds should have been able to stick to a line in such fashion. Scent of course was undeniable, but I may explain for the benefit of those who do not know the country that we never went near a village (there are practically none in the district), nor very near a farmhouse, and, indeed, it would be difficult to find a country anywhere so quiet and peaceable as this on a day when hounds are not expected, but run into it from some distant place. John Greenwell a day or two later wrote an account of the hunt, intending to send it to a local paper, but it never went, and I have treasured it until the writing has become so faint that it is almost undecipherable. Those who know the country will appreciate the fact that with a fox found at Gibraltar and hunted—after the first half-hour—by nine hounds only, we traversed nearly two-thirds of the Braes of Derwent country, went round, and worked back to within about half a dozen miles of the place we had originally come from.

Colonel Cowen was a tremendous favourite with all sections of society, and a kindlier man never wore scarlet. He had great enthusiasm, too, but he was not altogether orthodox in his methods of hunting a country, and, notably, concerning the hour of starting. This lack of punctuality was, however, entirely due to the fact that his friends, wherever he met, insisted on providing entertainment for the inner man, and though the Colonel (who was an early riser) and his hounds would be at the appointed place of meeting well before the advertised time of half-past ten, he did not like to disappoint them. Strangers and occasional visitors to the pack at all times received a most hearty welcome, but the arrival of one or two late comers often meant further delay, pending the refreshment of the delinquents. I well remember one lawn meet at Sherburn Towers, then the residence of the late Mr. Gray, for the gallop which followed what the Scotch call the "sederunt" was about the fastest and best I ever saw in the Colonel's country. I remember that I was very late, and also that on the road to the meet I caught up two neighbours equally late. We had hoped that hounds might not have got away from the first draw, and our road to the covert

took us past Sherburn Towers, where, rather to our surprise, we found that hounds had not moved off, and that a very large field was still being entertained. We were hailed and literally ordered to come in, and when someone ventured to suggest to the Colonel that the day was wearing on, he replied that we were certain to find in the whin, which was not a couple of hundred yards from the house. This whin was placed at the east end of Spen Bank Plantation, and has long been ploughed out, but at the time I am writing of—the spring of 1884—it was a nice covert. The move came at last, and as we entered the field it hardly looked promising to see dozens of foot people all round the gorse. Hounds were being trotted across the field between the covert and the house when there came a halloo, and in a moment the pack were round the whin and into the wood. But this they left again in a moment, and fairly flew along the side of the hill to Norman's Riding and Snook Hill, when they went left-handed over the hill to the Brockwell Covert. This they did not enter, but skirted the boundary fence, and then ran up the valley of the Barlow Brook to Reely Mires. Thence they bent to the right and went by Sealburn, Bucks Nook, and the Duke's Hag, over a fine line of open country, to Hedley-on-the-Hill. Wheeling left-handed here, they ran over Airy Hill and by Ravenside to Milkwell Burn Wood, and going over the field adjoining the wood, hounds were running in view, coursing their fox, in fact, and though he found a rabbit hole in the boundary fence, he was quickly got out and killed. This was a fifty minutes' gallop over a fine, open country. There was no check, and the pace was first-rate throughout. But I have a sequel to tell, and first I may say the run was a good deal talked about for long enough, for everyone had a good start, and there was some rather tall riding, especially during the first twenty minutes. Well, many years after, since Mr. Priestman had the country, in fact, I was talking over certain old hunts with Mr. Gray, jun., and I mentioned this particular run as being about the best thing I had ever seen in the country. "Yes," he replied, "I arranged that hunt well. The fact is, my father was very nervous that hounds might not find. There was no reason for his doubts, for, as you know, Spen Bank was always full of foxes, but I thought

I would make sure, so I had a fox ready in the Ravenside lane, and all the hunt up to that point was a drag, well laid so as to bring in the best country." He went on to say that when hounds were coming from Airy Hill to Ravenside the fox was shaken out of a bag, and the man who had done the trick hid himself among the fir trees of a tiny plantation, and no one was any the wiser. "I think the Colonel was a little suspicious," he also told me, but nothing ever transpired and everyone was pleased.

Personally, I never had the least suspicion, but I did not know the habits of Spen Bank foxes as I do now, and at the time I thought that certain big coverts were avoided because the fox was being pressed all the way. With the farmers Colonel Cowen was a great favourite, and he was always doing someone or other a good turn. I have seen his farm cart ten miles away from Blaydon Burn, laden with hurdles for a farmer who had had a hole or two bored in his hedges, and I have taken part in entertainments which he provided for men who helped him by walking puppies or looking after foxes. I do not mean the ordinary puppy show entertainment, but little special treats which were much appreciated. For example, if hounds were in the Riding Mill district he would occasionally order dinner for a dozen or so at Havelock's Hotel, and if it was in the spring of the year he would send a monster salmon, a turkey, and perhaps a round of beef for the dinner. He would then invite any farmers he particularly wished to entertain, and during the day's hunting would make up the party from among his hunting friends. There were other places, too, at which the same procedure was adopted, but I mention Riding Mill because I was present at two of these dinners which took place there, the Colonel being the host on one occasion, while at the last dinner of the sort I remember Colonel Cowen and Mr. Fred Lamb (Master of the Harriers) were joint hosts. And *apropos* the first of these dinners I got into temporary and very slight trouble with Colonel Cowen, for, as he said, hollering his hounds on to a fresh fox, but, as I said, halloaing hard because two-thirds of the pack had gone away with a fox. I may mention here that one of Colonel Cowen's unorthodox proceedings was the infusion of a considerable amount of bloodhound blood into his foxhound

kennel. Doggy men will know that the Master of the Braes of Derwent was a great breeder of bloodhounds and of several varieties of gun dog. He judged at many of the most important dog shows, and was one of the greatest authorities of the day on all sorts of sporting dogs. Much of his hunting took place in big woodlands, and he had an idea that his foxhounds wanted more nose and less pace for this particular sort of hunting. He therefore tried a bloodhound cross, which was not very successful. The cross-bred hounds certainly hunted well in covert, but they dwelt on the line far too much in the open, and were lacking in drive. At the time I am writing of, more than thirty years ago, the experiment was engaging some attention, and several masters of hounds visited the pack to see how it worked. I do not remember that any of them approved, except perhaps Mr. Maynard, who was then an old man, and who possibly had the same ideas as the Colonel. I have an idea that Mr. Maynard had two or three of these cross-bred hounds in his kennel for a short time, but he very quickly altered his opinion, finding them too slow for the very open North Durham country. Well, one day the Blaydon Burn pack were hunting in the Guards Wood, and foxes went up and down the gill but would not break. I do not think the Colonel cared whether they broke or not that day, for scent was good in covert, and the music was magnificent. The field became scattered and hounds divided. With one or two others I was near the Duke's Hag when a fox and about twelve couples of hounds crossed the lane, and went on towards Hyons Wood. Then it was that I halloaed hard, but of course made no attempt to stop hounds, because two-thirds of the pack were there, and I had no idea whether this fox had been hunted for an hour or only for a few minutes. Two or three of us followed on, hounds going through Hyons Wood, and very fast to Whitton-stall, where the fox got to ground in a drain at the Mains farm. The Colonel and his huntsman and others of the field arrived a quarter of an hour later, and I caught it hot for halloaing, but we soon made it up, for I explained that I was quite unaware he wanted to go on hunting in covert, and that I did not know the hunt servants had orders that day to stop hounds from running in the open. The dinner

at Riding Mill a week later was the outcome of my injudicious behaviour, and Colonel Cowen made a facetious speech, in which he implied that jumping fences was more in my line than really hunting foxes. This, by the way, was far from the truth, for I always considered the hound work of much more importance than anything else in hunting, only the Colonel, with whose hounds I was an occasional visitor, did not at that time know it. But I remember at the Newcastle races of the following summer having a long talk with the Master, who was somewhat surprised to find that I knew all the hounds in the North Durham pack, and was a fairly frequent visitor to the kennels. "My experience is," he said, "that all the young men who hunt only want to gallop and jump, and care nothing for hound work," and doubtless this is true of many men in many countries.

I am nevertheless inclined to think that in the smaller countries, where people hunt throughout the season in the same company and with the same hounds, a fair number of regular followers not only appreciate hound work, but know by sight and name all, or nearly all, the best hounds in the pack. And in the North Durham country five and thirty years ago I know this was the case even with the younger men. Captain Apperley, John Greenwell, and his cousin, Alan Greenwell (for many years secretary of the hunt), Hutton Maynard (the Master's eldest son), and possibly one or two others, knew the hounds as well as the huntsman did, while at the present day Miss Rogerson not only knows every hound and its peculiarities, but in four cases out of five also knows the note of any single hound which speaks, provided, of course, that the chorus is not great enough to drown the individual note. Where fields are always large the hound lover must find it difficult to become really acquainted with the pack he follows, but even then it can be done by degrees, if only the enthusiast has a quick eye and a good memory. "I know a lot of these hounds, and I know a lot of their names, but I never can remember which name belongs to any particular hound," I once heard a young man say, and a year or two later, when he had become a Master and I visited his kennels, I reminded him of it, and he confessed that he still found the same diffi-



culty about the names at times, although when hunting he knew what every hound did. Even when I was looking over his pack he held forth as to the merits of one good-looking bitch, and then turned to the huntsman and asked whether she was "Lively" or "Likely." This, however, is a digression, and, to return to Colonel Cowen and his pack, I must not forget to say that his huntsman, Siddle Dixon, was quite an original, but in many ways a wonderful man.

His father, often called Old Siddle Dixon, was huntsman to the Newcastle and Gateshead Harriers, and his son, John Dixon, is now stud groom to Mr. I. E. Cowen, son of Colonel Cowen, and secretary of the Braes of Derwent. Siddle Dixon, jun., was a bold and fearless rider, and had the very best huntsman's voice I ever heard. His style of talking to his hounds as they drew was marvellous, his voice being loud and yet extremely melodious, and his halloa was simply wonderful, while his voice "carried" in a fashion I have only once known before or since. But in ordinary conversation his Tyneside dialect was so pronounced that the Southern would not have understood a word he said, and he was rather of the uncultured and rough order of huntsmen. Many of his whippers-in I have some slight recollection of, but only a man named Brown—frequently spoken of in the district as James Edward, with no mention of his surname—struck me as an original. James Edward was not of the hunt servant breed like Siddle Dixon, but he also was a bold and determined rider, with the character of being able to "go" on all sorts of refractory steeds. In addition, he was about the best handler of a fox I ever saw, and to the casual eye the most careless. I have seen him more than once thrust his hand into a drain when it appeared almost obvious that the fox must have been facing him, but I never saw or heard of his being bitten, and he was quite in his element and simply invaluable at a dig. He had, in fact, many of the qualities of a high-class hunt servant, but he was unsteady, and the Colonel was obliged to part with him, after which he took—as far as I can remember—to horse-breaking. Siddle Dixon continued to act as huntsman until Colonel Cowen gave up in 1895, both being at the time well up in years; indeed, for some seasons the hunting

had been greatly confined to the woodlands, and hounds were more in the east of the country than in the west. Just as there was "lamentation in the Vale of Sheepwash when Michael Hardy died," so there was lamentation in the Vale of Derwent when Colonel Cowen announced his intention of retiring, and this was perhaps the more pronounced because at the moment there was no one to take his place; indeed, during the season 1895-6 the country was not hunted, except on two or three occasions, when Mr. Rogerson brought over the North Durham, but the distance was too great to permit of much country being drawn. In the following year Mr Lewis Priestman came forward, and is now in his twenty-sixth season as Master, and I am only voicing public opinion when I say that throughout this long period the country has enjoyed capital sport and pronounced prosperity.

That the style of hunting has become greatly changed, and that the sport has been of a faster and more lively character than it was during the latter period of Colonel Cowen's mastership is a fact which admits of no dispute, but this I can explain as being due to two or three very natural causes. In the first place, as I have shown, Colonel Cowen kept the hounds until he was an old man; he was, moreover, a biggish weight in the latter years of his mastership, and greatly preferred hunting in the long gills which intersect the country to running in the open. Then many of his hounds still had the bloodhound strain, and the field had become accustomed to woodland hunting, and, in point of fact, the hunting was latterly conducted on a plan which was a little slow for young blood. The new Master was, broadly speaking, forty years younger than his predecessor, was a hard man over a country, and had been for several seasons a regular follower of the North Durham, Tynedale, and Zetland packs. He had kept horses at Bishop Auckland, for the Zetland, as well as at home, and he had many hunting friends of his own age, anxious to hunt with him, and who were keen on the riding as well as on the hunting part of the business. I should explain, however, that Mr. Priestman had had most of his early hunting with Colonel Cowen's hounds, and had, in fact, been for several seasons one of the regular followers of the pack. He knew the country and its inhabitants, and

was a personal friend of the older members of the hunt, as well as of the young hunting folk of both sexes among his own contemporaries whom he enlisted as new members. He had also from early boyhood been an enthusiast of hunting, determined to acquire knowledge of the sport in all its surroundings. He had studied the conditions which belong to present day hunting, and had for several years been remarkably well mounted and well turned out. He had no hounds to begin with, as Colonel Cowen's pack had been disposed of during the previous spring, and he had no kennels beyond the old buildings of the defunct Shotley Bridge Beagles. He at once built new kennels on his own property at Tinkler Hill and procured drafts from other kennels with which to begin the season. I shall have something to say about these later, but at present I may put it on record that the new scratch pack did wonderfully well in their first season, and that this was almost entirely due to the fact that the best of the new hounds were possessed of any amount of drive. Naturally some were better than others, but the best—though getting on in years—took to their new country as a fish takes to water, and the upshot was that before the season was at an end foxes instead of hanging to the woodlands were being forced into the open, the result being that capital runs—many with long points—were being obtained over a fine, wild country, the going of which, outside the coverts, is, in spite of the hilly nature of the land, on the whole the very best I ever found in any country.

One of the first things Mr. Priestman did after he assumed the mastership of the Braes of Derwent was to map out the country into quarters or districts, and arrange a plan by which every covert should be drawn, when possible, in regular order, so that there should be the same amount of hunting everywhere, and no complaints of one covert or district being favoured at the expense of another. Like every other country, the Braes of Derwent has its favoured localities, and, as a matter of course, certain fixtures are much more popular than others, but the plan of hunting each district in turn has worked very well, and I need hardly say that many of the very best hunts have come from the least popular coverts, while occasionally the best coverts in the best country have had

their unlucky times. Some slight description of the country may be given, as was done when the North Durham country was described, and, first, it may be explained that many of the coverts are what are generally called "gills," which means that they are wooded ravines with a brook running through them. The banks of some of these ravines are a trifle steep, but every crossing is well known, and there are plenty of them. The other coverts are fir plantations, often with an undergrowth of heather, and open gorses such as are to be found in the adjoining Tynedale and North Durham countries. Foxes are impartial in their attention to coverts, and one year a certain covert or group of coverts close together will invariably hold two or three, while in the following season these places may be drawn blank three or four times. But there are so many coverts in each of the four quarters of the country that a long jog from covert to covert, except after an incursion into a neighbouring country, is almost unknown, and as foxes are, on the whole, very plentiful, there is seldom much waiting for the necessary article. During the mange epidemic as many as five blank days occurred in a season, but matters have entirely changed in this direction, and I imagine it is several seasons since hounds went home without having hunted at least one fox. For my own part, I have not been out on a blank day in the North of England for at least fifteen years, and during that period I cannot remember the Braes of Derwent ever being longer than two hours in finding, while, as a rule, there is a fox in the first covert drawn, and a great number of hunts have been begun before eleven o'clock. It has already been explained that the country is long and narrow, with the Tyne Valley for its northern boundary, and the river Derwent running through its southern side. Also, I have mentioned the ridge of hill in the centre between the two rivers, and have stated that from either river to the crown of the hill is a long, fairly regular slope, which is in most places so gradual that when hounds are running towards the top it is all good galloping ground. The gills all run upwards from one or other of the rivers, most of them being on the Derwent side of the country, and few of them being over a mile in length, with the exception of the Pont Gill, which is wooded for three miles and is

good covert the whole length of its course. The gradual rise from the rivers to the backbone of the hill is about five miles in the centre of the country, less towards its eastern end, and more to the west, and the rise varies from 400ft. to 700ft., which means that the hill immediately west of Axwell Park is some 400ft. above the two rivers, while Barley Hill, south-west of Minsteracres, is 700ft. above the Derwent, where it flows through Shotley Bridge.

The Derwent is a swift running river with a rapid descent of water, and though Shotley Bridge is only ten miles by road from Swalwell, where the Derwent flows into the tidal Tyne, the bed of the river under Shotley Bridge is 300ft. above sea level. The Tyne, on the other hand, is, at Stocksfield, probably not more than 50ft. above sea level, and this means that there is a much greater rise from the Tyne to the summit of the ridge than from the Derwent to the same place. Indeed, before motors came, when one drove from Shotley to Riding Mill, it was trotting ground everywhere, except the first half mile, whereas, coming the other way, say, from Riding Mill to Kiln Pit Hill, it was a steady climb, about two-thirds of which was walking ground. And while the country between the Derwent and the top of the hill is, for the most part, a very gradual slope, the land on the north side of the hill has three sharp rises and a small plain of nearly a mile on the top of each rise. The land, in fact, rises in tiers, and there are two parallel high roads going north and south, and not very far apart, while there are many cross lanes. To give some idea of the country I may briefly describe the road from the Derwent at Allansford to the Tyne at Riding Mill, a distance of about ten miles. Allansford is a tiny hamlet consisting of a country house and a couple of cottages on one side and a mill and two cottages on the other side of the river. From a picturesque point of view the place is beautiful, for the river curves through steep and densely-wooded banks, and the old stone bridge, which rises 8ft. from the ends to the centre, and which some distance away looks more like an ornamental arch than a bridge, is a wonderful piece of masonry, showing beautiful design. How old it is I do not know, but the road was at one time a direct coach route from Leeds to Edinburgh, and was originally a deviation from the Watling



Street, which it joins seven miles north and twenty miles to the south. Hard by are two farms with histories, Hole House and Wharnley Burn, once the property of the Maddison family, which came to an end in the persons of two bachelor brothers, one of whom was Postmaster-General more than one hundred and twenty years ago, and the other Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1782, and Secretary of Legation when the Peace of Paris was signed a year later. All that remains of Hole House is one corner of the original building, which is now used as a farmhouse, but even in this there is a secret room, and the walls are of immense age. The Maddison property went to the Greenwells of Broomshields through a sister of the celebrities just mentioned, and many years ago a lot of their old Court costumes were taken out of an old press to use in private theatricals, but the clothes of both brothers were so small that no one except a boy of fourteen could wear them, and John Greenwell—whose middle name was Maddison—decided that neither of the brothers could have had an ounce of sport in him, or he never would have left such a beautiful spot as Hole House to enter into the political world. Wharnley Burn is famous for the fact that one of the last of the Mosstroopers lived, and died there in 1714, but was denied "Christian sepulture," and is buried beneath a tree on the bank above the river. Another Maddison, always called Mad Maddison, who lived some three hundred years ago, was, in his descendant's opinion, a real sportsman, for, having broken all the laws of his country, he was declared outlaw by the Bishop of Durham, who sent a troop of horse to Shotley Bridge, with orders to bring Maddison back with them. This they succeeded in doing, but their arrival was unexpected, and Maddison, who lived at Shotley Hall, had to bolt from a side entrance to the house. He succeeded in getting a horse from one of his tenants, and gave the troop a rare run, but his horse, probably out of condition, stood still at Muggleswick Park, some seven or eight miles away. Even when dismounted Maddison beat his pursuers for a time on foot, but they caught him at the Sneepe, and hailed him to Durham, where he paid the penalty for his crimes. The present Shotley "Old" Hall is built on the site of Mad Maddison's house, which is about three miles lower down the stream than Allansford.

Readers will, perhaps, pardon me for having whipped off on to local history; but, by way of excuse, I may say that though I know something of the historical conditions of the district in which I was born and brought up, I care most for it on account of the sport of all sorts I have seen in it. In the Allansford district every field and almost every inch of woodland reminds me of some incident in hunting, and I may now go on to say that the high road between Allansford and Riding Mill passes through no village, no town, and no population. It is a land of wide pastures of "white" land and fir plantations, and just as good scenting ground as I ever saw. The road winds up the hill from Allansford, and in the first mile or two there are a few fields—always the smallest fields—of arable land; but when the higher ground is reached these disappear, and it is grass, and nothing but grass, all the way to the Tyne Valley. I am making rather a point of this because a correspondent writes me saying that, although he does not know the country, he has always understood that the plough land was more extensive than the grass, and he refers me to *The Hunting Countries of England*, in which the following is, in the description of the Braes of Derwent: "Most of the land is under the plough—though grass fields come in here and there, more often in the form of temporary seeds." I have looked up the reference, and find it correct. And I turn to *Baily's Hunting Directory*, where the description of the country is as follows: "A bank and stone wall country; about 60 per cent. pasture, 15 per cent. plough, and the remainder about equal proportions of woodland and moor." Who gave the description for *Baily* I have no idea, but it is absolutely true, and I feel quite certain that "Brooksby," who wrote the *Hunting Countries of England*, cannot have seen the western and bigger side of the Braes of Derwent country, but has probably judged the hunt from what he saw from Blaydon Burn, the residence of the late Colonel Cowen. The volumes describing the various countries were written more than thirty-five years ago, and it is possible that some land has been laid down to grass since then, but I may add that by far the greater part of the arable land in the hunt is at the extreme east of the country, about Blaydon Burn, Barlow Fell, and Greenside. There are odd fields of

arable in the lower part of the Derwent Valley, but, as in the Tynedale country, the moment the higher land is reached the arable gives way entirely to grass.

The tiny hamlets of Carterway Head and Kilnpit Hill, with an odd cottage here and there, are the only houses on the high road from Allansford to the Tyne, and west of them there are no villages in the hunting district, except Edmundbyers and Blanchland, the first named actually on the moors, and Blanchland near the head of the Derwent, and so remote that hounds are never there except to draw the coverts in the immediate neighbourhood. Why foxes never run from inland coverts to the big woods round about and beyond Blanchland I do not know, but they never do, whereas Blanchland foxes five times out of six come down the valley. In all this western end of the hunt there are no railways—Blanchland is eleven miles from the nearest railway—no collieries, and no population, and no houses except scattered farms and cottages, and, as has been explained, foxes seldom hang to the woodlands, but are quickly driven to the open, and make long points.

There are two divisions in the western part of the hunt, one extending from Ebchester, on the Derwent, right up to and beyond Blanchland, and the other to the north from the summit of the hill down to the Tyne. In the home division, where the kennels are situated, there is a chain of coverts close at hand, but north of the Derwent, and some two or three little places on the south side, which may be drawn from a kennels' meet. There are, as a matter of fact, lots of foxes quite close to the kennels, but it is difficult to stop them out, as there are many old pitfalls on the hillside behind, where coal was worked from collieries behind the hill many years ago. When Mr. Priestman first took hold he used to find in the gill which joins the puppy yard, but there is now a building estate (as I have mentioned) close at hand, and the foxes are not there in the daytime, though strongly in evidence as far as poultry claims are concerned. The upshot is that hounds are usually taken from a kennel meet to the Spring Wood, on the Shotley Hall estate, and this is a fairly sure find, and only half a mile from Mere Burn one of the great strongholds of the hunt. Two brooks—and consequently two gills—come through this Mere Burn, and in parts of it there is capital

lying, but it is a difficult place to get away from, for the land is undulating; the fir trees are in places 70ft. to 80ft. high, and some of the rides are terribly deep; while the covert has two or three spurs which hounds may go through unseen. Yet at times very fine runs come from the Mere Burn, and within the last few years I have seen one Mere Burn fox go to ground in a field drain, two miles beyond the Haydon boundary (near Slaley), and another killed at the east end of the Guards Wood, on the Prudhoe Hall estate, which is at the extreme north-east of the country. During the war much of the Mere Burn was cut down. Still, hounds were some years ago probably more often lost by some of the field in the Mere Burn than elsewhere, for the crossings are difficult and deep, and the rides nearly all go east and west. If hounds went up or down the bigger gill they were good to follow, but if they went from the main gill to the spur called Clark's Pastures it was quite another matter, for they can travel twice as fast as horsemen over two difficult crossings, and were often clean out of sight and hearing when one reached the end of the covert. Many of the field used to remain in the lane near Newlands Grange, for foxes usually break on that side, but in spite of the drawbacks I have pointed out the place is very popular, and always well foxed, while, as a general rule, its foxes are strong runners, with a big knowledge of country. Indeed, foxes come to Mere Burn from all parts of the centre and west of the country, and no matter how often the place is drawn or run through it never fails when a fresh fox is wanted. West of Mere Burn is the Golf Wood and Hammer Mill Dene, while just west of Shotley Hall are Brown's Bog, Field Head Wood, Snods Edge Wood, and the Horse Shoe. These are much smaller coverts than Mere Burn, and probably Brown's Bog is the best, but foxes from all of them either go east to Mere Burn or west to the Sneep, and seldom break up the hill to the north. Another good covert in this locality was Fyne House, high up the hill, and well placed for a run, and north of it, nearly two miles away, is Newhouse, a fifty-acre plantation with a heather bottom, which during the early part of Mr. Priestman's mastership provided more foxes and more hunts than any other covert in the country. Both have now disappeared, but hounds

find in the mass of brushwood which remains. With the exception of Newhouse, the coverts I have mentioned are all on the Shotley Hall estate, the owner of which, Mr. Hugh Walton-Wilson, has died since this paper was written. The Master, however, rents a good deal of the shooting, entirely in the interests of the foxes, for he has no time to shoot. Two miles west of Shotley and south of the River Derwent is the Hole House Gill and a small covert at Bridge Hill, which are occasionally drawn, but they are not sure finds, and in the long run it pays better for hounds to meet at Allansford, and draw up the river. This draw is a most complicated bit of country, which includes Mosswood Banks, the Sneep, and the Badger Wood on the north side, and Derwent Grange Wood, Castleside Wood, and the Hisehope and Horsley Hope Gills on the south side of the Derwent. Both sides of the river are well foxed, and probably the half-dozen coverts I have mentioned afford more sport than any other group in the hunt, for there is a fine open country on either side, and foxes of late years have hung very little to the river, but have gone boldly away. Foxes found at Mosswood will frequently keep to the river until they reach the Sneep, and at times they will cross and re-cross, going up one side and down the other, and *vice versa*, but quite an extraordinary number break at the Badger Wood (a small plantation which terminates the chain of coverts), and boldly face the long ascent to the higher ground about Black Hedley. Indeed, the Badger Wood has been the real starting point for scores of good hunts, and it is also remarkable for the fact that on one windy day hounds travelled up the long line of grass for a considerable distance with three foxes and four hares in front of them, and in full view of the field. Hares and foxes seemed to be making for one point, and it was only when the lane at Durham Field—a mile from the covert—was reached that hounds, who had stuck religiously to the particular fox they had hunted out of covert, were free from what looked to be most ridiculous obstruction.

When hounds draw up the Derwent side from Allansford the meadows above the river banks form a fine coign of vantage for the field, who go forward, but behind the pack,



and frequently view a fox into the open country when that fox is half a mile or so in front of the pack. If a fox breaks right-handed, as many do, he has the best country in the hunt before him; but if hounds are some distance behind, Master Reynard is very apt to work in a half circle until he reaches the river banks again, and when this happens it is generally difficult to force this particular fox into the open a second time. As the Sneep is approached the banks of the river become very steep, and in some places are dangerous for hounds, and near Crooked Oak farm there is a certain slab of rock, half-way down a wooded precipice, where foxes often lie, and where at times they will remain while hounds are drawing, knowing that they cannot be reached. Their tactics, however, were discovered many years ago, and now a whipper-in goes forward at the right moment, and if there is a fox on the rock who will not move throws a stone or clod of earth at him. One of the very best hunts I ever saw had its origin with a fox that was said to have come off this ledge of rock. Hounds had been hunting for an hour or two, and foxes were sticking to the river banks with persistency, when there came a halloa near Crooked Oak farmhouse, and Mr. Priestman, who was then hunting hounds, took them to it and they hit it off in the lane just east of the farm. Then for three-quarters of an hour they ran hard over the best country in the hunt, going east—if memory serves—as far as Highfield farm on the Whittonstall estate. But all the time they were making a half circle, and fifty minutes after the halloa hounds were back at the river and reduced to slow hunting. This was a grand gallop, done at a ripping pace, but when hounds reached the western end of the chain of Sneep coverts everyone was there, for hounds had described a wide half hoop, and the field had been on the inside all the way. Hounds never lost the line, but after having travelled some eight or nine miles of open country in forty-five minutes, they took twenty minutes between the Badger Wood and Silver Tongue, a distance of about a mile, but strong covert all the way. Near Silver Tongue they left the Derwent on the south side, and on the Durham side of the stream hunted steadily up Horsley Hope Gill, and reached the open again close to the railway, which divides the country from that of the North Durham. Here-

abouts the country is very wild, being a bleak moorland, about 1,200ft. above sea level, but hounds hunted on nearly to Burn Hill station. They bent left-handed—which means inland—short of the station, and crossed the Whitehall allotments, parts of which were almost waterlogged but luckily the pace was not great at this part of the hunt. An hour after leaving the Sneep they arrived at the North Plantation—one of the coverts known as Lord Bute's—and by this time the awkward going and the depth of the moor had shaken off three-fourths of the field. Still, there were nearly thirty riders when hounds entered Lord Bute's, but many were from the far side of the country, and a long way from home, the upshot being that when hounds worked through to the high road there was a general departure. The Master, two whippers-in, and three others were then left with hounds, who had a line out of the covert on to Eliza farm. It did not look hopeful, but hounds disappeared behind an avenue of beech trees, and the half-dozen trotted round to see if they could carry it on beyond. When we had gone past the beeches and looked for hounds nothing was to be seen; but a moment later we discovered them a quarter of a mile ahead, going just as fast as they could travel. Luckily, the fox, who had been heading towards Woodlands, had turned on Sheepwalks farm and gone over to Rippon Burn, and we caught hounds as they crossed the lane, a good mile beyond Eliza farm. And as they ran through Rippon Burn one or two of us viewed the fox in the open field leaving the neighbourhood of the covert. Hounds were close behind, and ran through a corner of the Sawmill Wood, across the park at Woodlands, and down to the brook near Sunnyside. They did not cross at first, but hunted fast down the brook to Harbuck, then went by Stockerley and Esp Green to Greencroft, running right through the park and on to the Tower Wood; but by this time it was quite dark, and we never knew for certain whether they killed their fox. Indeed, after vigorous horn-blowing had brought two-thirds of the pack to the Tower, it was far too dark to count them, but there were not many missing when the kennels were reached. This was an extraordinary hunt, and the last part of it much the best, for hounds were racing all the time, and from the North Plantation to the Tower Wood they had

made a seven-mile point over as good a grass line as there is in the North Durham country.

The whole hunt lasted over three hours, and there were even longer points in it than I have just mentioned, viz., from where hounds turned in the early part of the hunt, when not far from Highfield farm, to Burn Hill, and from Burn Hill to the finish. Of course, the middle part was slow, but good hound work, and the day was one of those on which scent was first rate on the grass, moderate on the heather, and very poor in covert. In the first and latter parts there was practically no covert work, and though hounds ran through the Woodlands district they really avoided all the coverts. Even at Rippon Burn the fox went just outside the coverts alongside the brook, and after that he never touched a real covert until he reached the Tower Wood. In many respects this was the best hunt I ever saw with Mr. Priestman's hounds, but it came rather late in the day, for it was beginning to get dark when we passed through Woodlands, and was really too dark for riding across country after that. It would, however, have been impossible to stop hounds after they had once begun to run hard on Eliza farm, and when the fox was viewed in front near Rippon Burn the riders were wide of hounds on the higher ground above them. This is only one of many good runs which have come from the Sneep coverts in recent years, and as a matter of fact many others have been described in the columns of the *Field*. The Sneep is famous for its romantic scenery, and the bend of the stream called the Horse Shoe is remarkably beautiful, and a great place for picnics in the summer. Above it, on the Durham side of the stream, are the most formidable head of earths in the hunt. These are on the wooded hillside, below Muggleswick Church, and are a labyrinth of rocks, with various entrances, and of such a size that they cannot be properly stopped. One and often two litters of cubs are bred there every spring, and instead of stopping in the usual way being resorted to, fires are lighted at either end of the earths during the night before hunting, and a watchman installed, who feeds the fires and keeps them going until the following afternoon. The curious thing about the arrangement is that though foxes will try the earths constantly during a hunting day, and in nineteen

cases out of twenty turn away from the fires, they go back to these earths as soon as the fires are out and the watchman has departed, and use them again, both to lie in and for breeding, as if there were never any fires to scare them away. Strangers to the country who have been told of the facts will sometimes hardly credit them; but they are quite true, nevertheless, and the system has been in vogue for many years and always successful.

Going up the river from Allansford the coverts on the north side of the stream include a wooded flat and gradually sloping banks which lie to the south, and which, one would think, would be the spot most particularly favoured by foxes. But the longer I live the more I find the orthodox theories about foxes to be frequently wrong, and though these Mosswood Banks are an ideal covert to look at—having a strong undergrowth, a southern aspect, and being nearly a mile from a road, and always dry—foxes are generally found on the flat below, where the land is frequently wetter, or on the precipitous cliffs of the Sneepe beyond. On the flat are some small grass enclosures, and across one of these runs an old stone drain, which foxes use, and where one has occasionally got to ground. From this drain I have seen a fox bolted by a squib, and while operations were in progress an old man who had brought a spade, and whom I knew as a rabbit-catcher, told me that he had over a period of years taken more than thirty foxes from that drain. This man had lived at Mosswood Cottages, barely a mile away, and had worked on the estate for many years, and during all the time he had procured foxes for a local bird stuffer, who “set them up” in a big case, the fox generally with a stuffed rabbit in its mouth, and sent them to the colliery villages to be raffled for at one shilling a ticket. The Durham miner is, as a rule, a fine friend to foxhunting, being both keen and enthusiastic, and every spring many litters are bred almost within a stone’s throw of the colliery villages, and seldom disturbed. Indeed, if the vixen moves her cubs, it is because she has been bothered by boys or prowling dogs, and never because the miners object to her presence. Sometimes there is a litter of cubs close by, whose whereabouts are known to all the inhabitants of a colliery village, and the

children are warned by the miners not to go too near, and, in fact, the cubs are as zealously guarded as they would be elsewhere. A place I have in mind is the Almshouses Whin, near Cornsay, in the North Durham country. This covert is a 6-acre gorse, quite in the open, and separated by a stream and fence from a small colliery village. But cubs are bred there, or are brought there every spring, and though they are always within sound of the village and its yelping curs, they are never disturbed, and hounds find there not only in the cubhunting period but all through the later season. When a man, however, comes along with a stuffed fox set up in a case, and a tale of how it was "made in Germany," or possibly was caught on the distant moors, the miner is often most anxious to possess such an ornament, and the shillings are freely produced. That foxes are at times killed illegitimately in the countries I am writing about, and in every other country in the kingdom, is in all probability true; but miners are never the delinquents in the north, nor, as far as I know, in any of the hunting countries which have a mining population within their borders.

The day on which the fox was bolted by a squib was a memorable one so far as I am concerned, for hounds were actually running foxes for just on seven hours. It was in the second year of Mr. Priestman's mastership, and I do not remember where the meet was, nor a great deal about the morning, beyond the fact that from eleven o'clock until two we were continuously hunting in the Mere Burn and other Shotley plantations. Then a fox got away and ran to the Sneep, and I think we got among fresh foxes. Anyhow, we had a good deal of woodland hunting, and finished by running to ground and bolting the fox in the manner I have just described. Although it was at the very end of the season, and not dark until nearly seven o'clock, the field, with one or two exceptions, departed after the bolted fox had been broken up; but Mr. Priestman was terribly keen, and went to draw Horsley Hope Gill—the only covert in the neighbourhood which had not been disturbed that day. The Master and his hounds disappeared into the gill, one whipper-in went forward, and Mr. Charles Balleny, now in British Columbia, and I, the only ones left, rode up the fields above the covert, and



viewed a fox which broke behind the whipper-in. Hounds were quickly on the line; indeed, I think they had the line in covert, and a quarter of an hour later we were over the North Durham boundary, hounds running hard. I am not going to describe the hunt which followed, which, indeed, would be most difficult, for, though there was a fine scent and an eager pack, the fox twisted about, taking us all over the country round Lord Bute's, and finally recrossing the railway line, which is the border between the two hunts, and going to ground in an open field near Castleside. It was now after seven o'clock, but we were unable to start for home at once, for certain hounds had disappeared into the drain behind the fox, and we had to get them out before we could leave. To cut a long story short, the hour of nine was striking by Benfieldside Church clock as we turned into the kennel lane, and just then the Master remembered that we were both engaged to a rather important dinner some distance away, and that the dinner was being given as a compliment to some of the foxhunters of the district.

On the southern bank of the Derwent west of Allansford, and half a mile beyond the bridge, lies Derwent Grange Wood, which is unlike any other covert in the district, being largely composed of beech and oak, and much more like a south country wood than most of those in the Derwent Valley. It contains a head of earths, and often holds a fox; but finds are not so certain on the south side of the river as they are on the north, until Horsley Hope Gill is reached. This joins the Hisehope beck at Combe Bridges, and the joint streams reach the Derwent at Combe Field House farm. Here again we have beautiful scenery and a very foxy neighbourhood; but foxes from either gill have a habit of going straight to the Muggleswick earths and it is because all the hunting with foxes found between Allansford and the Sneep, from both sides of the river, begins very often with a visit—on the part of the fox—to the Muggleswick earths that many riders prefer to stay on the north side of the Derwent, where about five times out of six they are in the right place. At times foxes go south towards the moors, but when this happens they quickly turn in again. They also go to the North Durham country from Horsley Hope, but their most frequent plan is

to try the Muggleswick earths, turn away from the fires, cross the river to the Badger Wood, and break into the open towards Durham Field. The crossings at the Sneep are not good for the field, except the most western one near the Horse Shoe. This is deep at times, but has a gravel bottom, and is kept free from big stones. A mile below at Lead Mill there is a terribly awkward crossing, the river being deep, with many holes, and great boulders of rock in the middle of the stream, which are being constantly moved by the flow of water when the stream is in flood. This crossing is oftenest the place which must be used if one is to keep with hounds, for it is on the direct line between the Sneep and the Horsley Hope Covert, and on every Sneep day foxes travel past it or cross the river near it when hunted. The Master has a fine oil painting of the pack and hunt staff crossing the Derwent at the Horseshoe Point, by Cuthbert Bradley; but when this crossing is used a climb of several hundred feet to the top at Muggleswick must follow, and as a matter of fact there are hereabouts a couple of miles of riverside country much more like the combes of the Devon and Somerset country than anything to be found elsewhere in these northern hunts. At Crooked Oak farm, on the north side of the river, above the Horseshoe Point, there is a fine coign of vantage which commands all the wooded cliffs, and which in a huge majority of cases is the starting point for hunts which come from the Sneep. But on a cold day in midwinter it is a cheerless spot, which produces laid-back coats and tucked-in tails. Hereabouts second horses are walked up and down the lane, and foot fox-hunters collect just as they do when tuft hunters are at work in a Devonshire combe. Motors and pony cars also affect the spot, and once I had a first-rate hunt on wheels from Crooked Oak. It was in 1883, and for the time being I had nothing to ride; but I owned an old thoroughbred who was just recovering from a sore back. He was not quite ready for the saddle, and was an awkward horse to drive, being a jibber, and an occasional bolter; but he did well that day, for his blood was up, and all the trouble I had was to hold him. Hounds had met at Castleside, and the field were at Combe-field House when a fox broke on Crooked Oak farm. No rider was within a mile, and all had to cross at Lead Mill, by which

time hounds were at Fyne House. At all events, I never saw anyone for an hour, when hounds, after covering a great deal of country, had run to ground midway between the present Master's house and the village of Ebchester, having made a point of five or six miles. Curiously, hounds went round the Mere Burn that day without going into it, for from the Bolisher Covert they ran parallel with the lane all the way to Newlands, only touching covert when they went through the corner of Clark's pastures. My old horse ran away with the dogcart down this long and gradual descent, but pulled up at once as hounds crossed the road in front of him at Stand Alone.

I could 'give many more accounts of good runs from the chain of Sneep coverts, and may mention that at one time it was not an easy matter to force foxes away from the neighbourhood of the river. I can think of days when one crossed the stream half a dozen times in the forenoon, and when foxes either went up the banks, or down the banks, but resolutely declined to face the open. But this state of affairs was, I am almost certain, chiefly due to the mange visitation, and was caused by the foxes being weak and feeble. Possibly, too, the hounds have more drive than they had nearly twenty years ago, but of this I am doubtful, for even the foundation hounds of the present pack were possessed of great drive, and were not in the least inclined to hang on the scent. On the other hand, I am quite certain that the foxes all over the country have improved in strength and stamina in an unusual degree since the mange was got under, and now good runs come just as frequently from the Sneep as they do from any small covert in the open country. West and North of the Sneep, between the Badger Wood and the village of Edmundbyers, and the covert at Hunter House, there is a pretty grass valley of four or five miles in length, in which there are two small plantations, Eddys Bridge Wood and Edmundbyers Burn Wood. Both occasionally hold a fox, but they are not frequently drawn, being somewhat remote. The Edmundbyers Burn covert is at right angles to the Derwent, half a mile from the river, and the North Durham ran through it in the course of their memorable hunt from the Oak Gill near Woodlands, to Bog Hall in the Haydon country. At Edmundbyers

one is very near the moors, and the same remark applies to all the south side of the Derwent Valley, between Eddys Bridge and Blanchland. But there is a nice covert at Hunter House, and an even better one at Roughside, from which at times there has been plenty of sport. Two miles further west is Deborah Wood, which has been mentioned in connection with a memorable hunt, and further west still are Ellers Hill and Cocklake Strips. All these coverts west of Roughside, belong to the Blanchland group, and those which lie beyond the village of Blanchland, viz., Deborah Wood, Ellers Hill, Cocklake Strips, and a good covert on the north of the river, called the Triangle, are hunted alternately by the Braes of Derwent and the Haydon Hounds. The landlords hereabouts are Mr. Edward Joicey, of Newbiggin House, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and Mr. Joicey is a former master of the Haydon, who lives elsewhere in the winter, and usually hunts with the Tynedale hounds. At one time there were many hunts from Ellers Hill, and a fair number from the Triangle, but this part of the hunt is very remote—the Triangle being quite fifteen miles from the kennels—and involves a big journey for most of the field. The country is at a high altitude, and often hunting is impossible owing to frost and snow, when it is quite practicable eight or ten miles farther down the valley. The upshot is that the Blanchland district is an early autumn and late spring country, and is little used during mid-winter for the reasons given. I may also add that it holds fewer foxes than the lower country, and in this respect is not to be compared with the Sneep, where the supply is always plentiful. At the Sneep the foxes are very carefully preserved by Mr. Utrick Ritson, of Muggleswick Park, a veteran who no longer follows hounds on horseback, but whose enthusiasm is still vigorous and of great value. Mr. Ritson is the father of five sons, who have all survived the war, these including Major J. R. Ritson, who was wounded and made a prisoner; Capt. Gerald Ritson, who captained the polo team which played in America nine years ago; Colonel W. Ritson, Colonel Ward Ritson, and Lieut. Alec Ritson. The family have all the shooting of the Sneep coverts, and all hunt regularly with the Braes of Derwent and North Durham whenever opportunity offers.

How the Haydon ever found their way into the extreme west of the Derwent Valley is explained by the fact that Mr. Joicey, when master of the pack, brought his hounds to Newbiggin House to hunt his own coverts at a period when Col. Cowen's hounds had ceased to go so far west. Indeed, I do not know that Col. Cowen ever drew the moor edge coverts, which have been mentioned, and which are several miles west of Blanchland; and after Mr. Joicey retired there was a short period when the Haydon was called the "Hexhamshire and Haydon," and had for a master a Mr. Wear, who lived within a few miles of Blanchland, close to the Braes of Derwent border. After Mr. Priestman took the last-named pack this Hexhamshire hunt drew certain coverts further down the Derwent Valley than Blanchland, and to which the Haydon had no right whatever. The two packs clashed once, and there was a good deal of friction, but when the late Major Harvey Scott took the Haydon an amicable arrangement was quickly arrived at, and now, as I have explained, certain coverts at the head of the valley are neutral to the two countries. On the north side of the Derwent, west of Eddys Bridge, about a mile from the river, there is a fine whin covert quite in the open, on Birkenside farm. This covert I have seen drawn by the Tynedale in two masterships, but since Mr. Priestman took the Braes of Derwent it has been exclusively his covert. Unfortunately, Birkenside whin has been burnt more than once, but it quickly recovers again, as it lies in a sheltered position and faces south; foxes are very fond of it. Other coverts hereabouts are Cronkley Banks, where cubs are usually bred, and Espershields, the last-named a narrow fir plantation with a heather bottom, almost a mile long, and extending from the crown of the ridge half-way to the river. This is one of the best coverts in the hunt as far as lying is concerned, and a fairly sure find, but Acton Wood and the Priest's Bank further west, and quite near to Blanchland, are by no means certain finds, and not very frequently drawn. Birkenside and Cronkley are on the Minsteracres estate, and Mr. John Cowen, secretary of the hunt, is the tenant of Minsteracres, and has the shooting in his hands. Minsteracres is, when everything is considered, the most sporting place in the hunt. It lies high, and is remote from population, has no



village near it, while on the estate are several hundred acres of woodlands, while for many years past there has always been a fine supply of foxes. The estate is a large one, and its southern side, between the river Derwent and the crown of the hill, consists of large pastures of grazing land, with no coverts except the whin at Birkenside, which I have mentioned, but round the hall and park, and on all the north side of the estate, are numerous plantations, two capital gorse coverts, and two long and rather narrow wooded gills. If foxes go the right way as good sport is forthcoming from Minsteracres as from any other part of the hunt, but to appreciate hunting about Minsteracres and Healey (which adjoins it on the north-west) country one should have that knowledge of the district which only comes of long acquaintance, and this is absolutely necessary if one is to remain with hounds. The fact is that in this part of the Braes of Derwent hunt there are a chain of coverts which extend from the Tyne Valley to the crown of the hill five or six miles away, and though the chain is broken in several places, many of the coverts are so close together that those who are not well up with hounds may easily lose touch with the pack.

But when this happens it is because a woodland fox is being hunted, and there is hereabouts so much woodland that the sort of fox I have in mind is not necessarily a fox which hangs to his own quarters, but rather one which travels far, and knowing the country well, prefers to run through the many coverts to going into the open. Thus the Minsteracres Gill is nearly two miles long, and is joined to the Kellas plantations at its western end, and a fox will take hounds the length of the gill, circle through the two huge Kellas woods, and by crossing the Lead road reach Healey Dene, another long gill, with supplementary spurs, separated by only a couple of fields from Healey Big Wood, a plantation of several hundred acres, much beloved of the vulpine tribe, but much of which has been recently cut down. And from Healey Big Wood he can reach Minsteracres Gill again without being in the open for more than five or ten minutes at a time, and repeat the same tactics if so inclined. But such a round as I have described—and I have seen many similar hunts—takes a full hour to complete even when scent

is good in covert, and hounds are running hard all the time, but more frequently, especially if scent is not particularly good in covert, fresh foxes intervene, and this applies to the Healey coverts even more than those of Minsteracres. It will be understood, then, that in hunts of this character a stranger must choose a pilot, and his choice may be lucky or the reverse, for the field has a habit of splitting up into groups, and is never concentrated as when the hunting takes place in the open. It is the case that all the regular attendants of these Minsteracres and Healey meets know the country well, but all have not the same ideas, and, for example, if hounds are drawing Healey Big Wood, or run a fox into it, men and women will be seen going in several directions, some along the many rides of the covert, others to points of vantage outside, and so forth. The covert has many rides through and across it, but they want knowing, for there is an occasional boggy bottom, and at least one dangerous place. And as regards the Kellas plantations, there is one good road through each of the woods, while the rides, especially in South Kellas, are almost bottomless in wet weather. The shooting of the Healey and Kellas plantations, the property of Mr. Warde Aldam, of Monk Fryston, Yorks, is rented by Mr. Dickinson, of Healey Hall, a regular follower of the hunt, who has a sublime disregard for the bogs in his own neighbourhood, but though he knows exactly when to hop round a bog, or get off and lead for a few yards, the same knowledge is not vouchsafed to everyone, and to put it briefly, great circumspection is required in these coverts.

It must be understood that what are called bogs are not real bogs like the Irish ones, but soft places of very small extent, generally not more than a couple of yards across, but green and inviting to the unwary, and quite soft enough to bring a horse down. What I have described is one, and the worst, side of hunting in the Minsteracres and Healey district, and now going back to the former place I may say something about its best side, and first I may mention the two whin coverts at Minsteracres. One of these is on Newfield farm, and foxes found on it five times out of six at once cross Barley Hill and go either to Newhouse or Espersields, both on the south side of the ridge. From the place named

they may travel on to any part of the country, but it may almost be taken for granted that a Minsteracres fox who begins by breaking to the south will never go near the big woodlands on the north side of the estate and beyond it. Adjoining the Newfield whin is a strip of plantation with fine heather lying, and if there is no fox in the whin there is generally one in this strip—Wylies Hill by name—and *vice versa*. Beyond is the high road, Allansford to Corbridge, and beyond that the open sawmill wood, with a gill to the east, and a whin called Letch Houses to the south. At the moment this is probably the best whin covert in the hunt, and not only have a great number of foxes been killed from it of late years, but some capital hunts have had it for their starting-point. Like the Newfield whin half a mile away, foxes break, as a rule, to the open country from Letch Houses, and perhaps most frequently to the east, but at times they go up and over the hill, and run to the Shotley plantations. Some four or five years ago hounds had a great afternoon hunt from this covert. They were put into it about two o'clock, and instantly chopped a fox, while at the same moment another fox broke up the hill to the south. Without waiting to break up the dead fox hounds were clapped on to the fresh one, and for the next thirty-five minutes ran hard over an open grass country to the river Derwent, which they reached on Hole House farm, about a mile east of Allansford. Here they checked, where there is a little belt of newly planted trees adjoining the river. A quarter of a mile away is a well-known badger earth (out of the stop that day), and the huntsmen had actually begun to cast hounds towards the earth when an old hound, whose name I do not remember, but who was by the Morpeth Solomon, and who was very light coloured, was seen just beyond the belt, and though he did not speak, it looked a certainty that he had the line. The pack were brought back, and hitting it off immediately crossed the river, and ran to the east of Castleside, going over the North Durham boundary, and as far west as Whitehall. They then went left-handed, but I cannot remember whether they touched Lord Bute's. They ran by China and Sheepwalks, however, and into the park at Woodlands, where they were stopped, because it was almost dark. This was a

great hunt with a very long point, and the curious part of it was that the fox as he reached the Derwent had the Sneepe covert on his right and the Shotley plantations on his left, but went straight on into a strange country, and apparently with no big covert in view.

Another fox a year or two earlier went from Newfield to Mickley, hounds covering the six miles between the two places without a check, and I think this fox got to ground. This gallop followed a first draw, and hounds were brought back to the Minsteracres neighbourhood. At which covert they found their afternoon fox I do not remember for certain, but am sure it was on the east side of the high road, either at the whin (Letch Houses) or the Sawmill Wood. Anyhow, they made a seven-mile point to the Haydon covert at Dukesfield, and the larger portion of the pack went out on the west side, while the others got on to a fresh fox in the covert. The master, who was the huntsman, and all the field with the exception of Mr. Dickinson and myself, remained in Dukesfield, the volume of sound suggesting that the full pack was there, though hidden to view; but we two, who had somehow reached the western boundary, had seen what had taken place, and did our best to follow. Hounds, however, had a long start, and they reached Steel Crag before we got near them, and then turned left handed. After a time we succeeded in stopping them on the open moor, and I had the rather difficult job of taking them some fourteen miles to kennel in the dark. Luckily, many of them knew my voice, and Mr. Dickinson was with me as far as Dukesfield, by which covert we went, thinking we might pick up the master and the rest of the pack. I am sorry I cannot give the dates of these hunts, but I have mislaid all my old hunting diaries, and also the cuttings from the *Field* in which the runs were described at the time. Those who took part in the runs I have mentioned will doubtless remember them. And while I am on the subject of hunts from the western end of the Braes of Derwent country, I may bring to recollection a joint meet of the Braes of Derwent and Haydon hounds. This meet was held after there had been a complete reconciliation between the two hunts, and took place at Blanchland. Though the place is so remote there was a field of over a

hundred, and Mr. Priestman hunted hounds. Almost as a rule a joint meet is (I think) a failure as far as sport is concerned, but on this occasion hounds found at Ellers Hill, and ran for thirty-five minutes without a check, killing their fox on the open moor, near the head of Nocton burn. It was a bad line the fox chose, but all in the open, and a big majority of the field never attempted to follow hounds after they left the valley near Riddlehamhope, the result being that only twelve were there when the fox was killed. Eleven of them were from the Braes of Derwent country, the solitary Haydon man being Archer, who was then huntsman of the pack. There was, I understand, a deal of festivity in Blanchland that day, and this festivity set in shortly after this hunt, but by this time the two fields had become sorted out, and when we drew Roughside, from which we had an afternoon hunt, the Haydon people had practically disappeared. I think I may say that the Haydon contingent that day was not in the least typical of the hunt as it is now, or as it was in Mr. Joicey's day, but that all the festive spirits of a big area had been got together perhaps more with a view to conviviality than hunting, and anyhow, I am sure that the two licensed houses of the beautiful old village would benefit considerably.

East of Minsteracres the country is open for many miles. There is a long narrow covert named Fotherley Gill, parallel with the Lead road, and a second gill at right angles to it, which joins Fotherley Gill at Low Bridges. Both gills are much favoured by foxes, and are frequently drawn with success. Further east again is a plantation called Watch Hill, the name being derived from the fact that the summit of this hill was once used as a lookout when attacks from the Scots—or in more recent times from Mosstroopers—were expected. The view from the top of this hill enables one to look over all the southern part of Northumberland, and a good deal further. Simonside Hill, near Rothbury, though thirty miles away, seems quite near on a clear day, and the Cheviot Hills beyond are also distinctly visible when there is no mist, whilst in the foreground the whole of the Tynedale country is laid out like a map, it being quite an easy matter to pick out all the well-known landmarks and many of the most



important coverts. And from the ridge of the hill—where one is in the Braes of Derwent country—it is possible to see a great deal of the Haydon country when looking westward, the Tynedale, Morpeth, Coquetdale, North Tyne, Border, and Percy countries when looking northward, and the North and South Durham, and Lord Zetlands when looking southwards. Probably also one's sight when looking to the south travels into the Hurworth and Bedale countries, for the old race-course at Richmond, with its landmark of "wooded height," is clearly discernible, and the eye can travel well beyond it on either side. Indeed, local knowledge is to the effect that objects and places can be located, both north and south, which are fifty miles away, and I myself have seen the Cheviot Hills on one side, then, by turning round, Richmond racecourse on the other, not once, but a score of times. If one is shooting up here or riding out with hounds in the summer, the views are always an attraction, and one notices them *en route* to a meet of hounds, but during a hunting day one is apt to forget all about them, and I remember a visitor from the West Cumberland Hunt being so much taken up with the view from the top of Grey Mare Hill—the next point to Watch Hill—that his horse walked into a drinking pond by the side of the lane while he was taking in the wonderful panorama. Whenever I have had time to look on a hunting day I am always struck by the appearance of the Tynedale country, which stretches out to the north in a grass plateau of about twenty miles either way. At the top of the hill I am writing about one is five miles above the River Tyne and several hundred feet above the plateau. This makes the rise (in the Tynedale country) from the Tyne to the higher ground appear to be much slighter than it really is, but the great beauties of the country from a hunting point of view are clearly discernible, for there is an absence of woodlands, an absence of railways, of all signs of population and of big villages, and, in fact, little is visible except large enclosures of grassland. It looks what it is, an ideal hunting country, and, though one can hardly see them, one knows that there is scattered about a fine supply of small, well-kept gorse coverts exactly where they are wanted.

The country round Watch Hill is all grass, some of it rather

steep, but most of it on a gradual slope. There are no coverts near the summit of the hill, and the plantation called Watch Hill is a mile below the ridge, and is not so good a covert as it once was, owing to the heather undergrowth having gradually disappeared. Fifteen years ago it was the most popular covert in the hunt, and the starting point of many good hunts, but times change, and hounds now run through it far oftener than they find a fresh fox in its recesses. In my early hunting days the Tynedale often came to Minsteracres, especially towards the end of the season, and I can remember a very fine hunt from Watch Hill, towards the end of the 'seventies. Hounds met at Minsteracres, and drew the coverts on the east side of the hall without finding. There were not too many foxes in this particular locality then, but they got on to a stale line in Fotherley Gill, and worked slowly to Watch Hill. The plantation was quite new then, and there was a lot of gorse where the trees now are, and from the lane the whole covert was visible. Hounds sent a fox out on the south side, who went over the hill and for a mile or two down the valley, and then circled right-handed to Eddy's Bridge, and came round by Birkenside and Moorgame to Minsteracres, and thence through several coverts to the Lead road, where he got into a drain under the road, and from which he was got out and killed. This was a fast and good hunt, though in a circle, and I remember that several of the Tynedale men of that day, who seldom came to meets on the south side of the Tyne, were loud in their praises of the country, and more particularly of the soundness of the going. More recently, perhaps eight or ten years ago, the Braes of Derwent had a great run from Watch Hill. They approached it from the Whittonstall side, found two foxes, and went away on the west side, running a fast loop of half an hour over the Fotherley farms and then regaining the covert. They were out again on the south side almost immediately, and ran to Allansford on the Derwent, went on into the North Durham country, and finally were stopped at dusk near a lonely house named Badajoz, which is situated midway between the West Auckland turnpike at Drover House and the meeting place of the North Durham at Salters Gate, and which is less than two miles

from Broomshields. The fox was viewed just in front a few minutes before hounds were stopped, but he was going on to Sand Edge Moor, and it was so dark that to go on would probably have meant losing hounds. In this hunt a cob, out at grass, joined in shortly after the Derwent was crossed, and remained with the leading horseman over many miles of country, jumping the walls like a stag, but not allowing anyone to go near him. When all was over he submitted to be caught quietly enough, and luckily someone had noticed the place where he joined the hunt, so there was no difficulty about taking him home. In fact, when a whipper-in arrived with him long after dark his absence had not been detected by the farmer who owned him.

North of Watch Hill and Fotherley Gill are coverts at Hindley Hall, and a chain of plantations owned by Lord Alledale, which extend alongside the River Tyne from Stocksfield to Riding Mill, and which at their western end are not widely separated from the Healey plantations. In this district of the hunt there is perhaps more woodland hunting than in any other part, but these Tyneside plantations have lots of dry lying, are well off for rides, and always hold foxes. In Broomley Hope—the biggest covert of the chain—there are main earths where cubs are always bred, and the little wood beyond, named Cat Dene, is also an almost certain find, and, as the field are generally on the east side of the covert when it is drawn, foxes break south and frequently go far afield. Indeed, two very fine hunts from Cat Dene have taken place in recent seasons. In one, at which I was not present, the fox was killed (I believe) near Allansford, and in the other in the open field near Browns Bog, half a mile from Shotley Field. West of Cat Dene is Shilford Wood, also a good covert, from which foxes break as a rule to the south, in full view of the field, and farther south, some two miles from the river, is Broomley Fell, a long, wooded ravine, and a really good covert, but not very often drawn, simply because there is no meeting place very near it and hounds generally run through it from Healey Big Wood, or from the riverside coverts just named, and which are drawn after meets at Hindley Hall or Hindley cross roads. One other covert on this north side of the country remains to be mentioned, and this is composed

of Hellister Wood and Straker's Bog. These two plantations are practically one covert, but there are two owners, Straker's Bog belongs to a relative of the Master of the Tyndale. The two coverts are a certain find, and have wonderful lying, Straker's Bog being partially a whin covert, and having an undergrowth of heather elsewhere, but foxes found here have a knack of ringing round Healey Dene and Healey Big Wood, and perhaps provide fewer good runs than a majority of Braes of Derwent foxes. I have now described all the western end of the hunt, and I may mention that the Master divides the district into four quarters and meets in each quarter once in every four weeks. On the south side the Shotley plantations are for one day, with meets at the kennels, Shotley Bridge, Ebchester, Newlands, or Shotley Field. The riverside coverts from Shotley Bridge to the Sneep inclusive, with meets at Bridge Hill, Allansford, or Caterway Head form the other southern section, while on the north side the Minsteracres and Kellas Coverts, with meets at Minsteracres, Scales Cross, and occasionally at Unthank or Winnow's Hill, comprise one of the northern sections, while the other includes the Healey, Lord Allendale's, and Mrs Pumphrey's coverts, and hounds meet most frequently at Healey Hall, Hindley cross roads, Hindley Hall, and occasionally at Broomley, or at Oaklands. This leaves out the Blanchland country, for which there are no regular days and hounds go there most frequently in the early autumn and late spring.

Before discussing the eastern side of the country it should be mentioned that there is a bit of intermediate country which may be used either from the east or west, the coverts being the Hollins Gill, the Duke's Rush, and The Heugh. Foxes are always bred at the Hollins, which lies a mile east of the Watling-street, and sometimes these coverts are first drawn from a Whittonstall meet, which, if it takes place on a Saturday, means going west when the Hollins country is done with, and going east if the meet is on a Wednesday. Plans are, as a matter of course, at times altered by foxes going in an unexpected direction and country being disturbed that was not intended to be drawn, but the main lines of the average meet are closely adhered to, and thus the country is all fairly

hunted. It must be understood, too, that the Blanchland country, though not in the regular rotation for meets, has fewer coverts and fewer foxes than any of the other districts, and that, whilst hounds are there less often than elsewhere, they go quite often enough to do all that is necessary.

In like manner the eastern end of the hunt is quartered, the district nearest the kennels including the Pont, and the coverts round Hamsterley Hall on the south side, and Milkwell Burn on the north side of the Derwent. Beyond, on the south side of the river, are the Gibside coverts, with Thornley Burn, and other places on the north side for the afternoon, and these take another day, while on the north side of the hill there are also two groups of coverts, one including the Blaydon Burn country, and the other the country near Prudhoe Hall. And almost in the centre of the eastern portion of the hunt are Chopwell Wood, the Spen Bank, and a few smaller coverts, and when these are drawn the order of procedure may have to be altered in accordance with what happens. Hounds, for example, meet at Armondside for Chopwell and at Low Spen for Spen Bank, and on these occasions it may be that Milkwell Burn is the afternoon draw from an Armondside meet, or that the Blaydon Burn coverts are visited from a Low Spen meet. With the exception of Chopwell and the Pont, the coverts on the eastern side of the hunt are not very large, but foxes found anywhere in the district may go from one "quarter" to another, or run through the best coverts in two or three "quarters," and when this happens there may be a rearrangement of plans. What occurs comparatively very seldom is that a fox found in the eastern portion of the hunt crosses the Watling-street to the west, or *vice versâ*, and this is somewhat remarkable, seeing that there is no natural boundary, such as a river or a great woodland, and that on the Watling-street between the Derwent and the Tyne there is only one small village (Whittonstall) of not more than twenty cottages. At times, of course, foxes cross the boundary between east and west in good hunts, and most frequently between the Hollins and the Mere Burn; but on five days out of six, if hounds begin the day in the east, they finish in the east, and this also applies



to the western side of the country. To go more into detail, there are two meets for the Pont—one at Long Close Gate, on the Newcastle to Shotley Bridge road, and the other at Pont Head, a bleak spot high up the country, where the Pont stream has its source. The two meets mean drawing the same coverts, from the south end after meeting at Pont Head, and from the north end after meeting at Long Close Gate.

The last-named place is most frequently chosen, and hounds begin, as a rule, by drawing the Hag Banks, on the Derwent, where a fox may easily cross the river into Chopwell Wood. Then exactly at the meeting place is a useful wood named Medomsley Banks, on the Hamsterley Estate, and east of it the Chimney Wood, both likely, but not certain finds, merely because all foxes bred there go sooner or later to the Pont Gill. This covert is three miles long and is a ravine, narrow in some places, broader in others, and with several spurs thrust out into the open country. It is perhaps as much beloved of foxes as any covert I know of in the north, and even quite late in the season there will often be four or five on foot by the time hounds have reached the centre of the covert. There are five different owners in the three-mile length of the ravine, and, therefore, there has at times been a good deal of trouble in connection with the stopping; but in these days two prominent members of the hunt, Mr F. Kirkup, of Medomsley, and Mr Robinson, of South Medomsley, have organised matters to great advantage, and running to ground is not so common as it once was. But the hunting which takes place at the Pont is not altogether popular, for the place essentially favours hound work, and good runs in the open do not come from it every day. The trouble is that hounds frequently divide, and that the foxes go up and down the ravine, or merely cross the open into one of the spurs and reach the main gill again. The field remain on the grass outside, and generally on the west side of the covert, and there is always a crowd of foot people from the collieries further away, and which, by the way, do not interfere with Pont hunting in the least. But the unexpected happens sometimes, and early in 1912 there came from the Pont one of the very best hunts which has taken place since Mr Priestman took the hounds. An enterprising fox left the covert by Southfields Farm, and

ran a ring round the Medomsley country, going back to the Pont. He went straight through, however, and with half a dozen riders in attendance on hounds they ran an extraordinary line into the colliery country at Tanfield, turning on the Pea Farm at Tanfield Lea, and going back to the Pont on a parallel line. Here the bulk of the field who had not followed hounds through the covert joined in, and hounds, having reached the Pont near the centre, ran up the Dipton Burn to South Medomsley, went over the golf links on Pontop Pike—the highest hill in the county of Durham east of the moors—and crossed into the North Durham country, going for two or three miles over a most unusual line and through a very populous country. They then sank the valley to Durham Hill, ran through Greencroft Park, crossed the Lobley Hill road half a mile west of Lanchester, had a check on Moor Leazes Farm, but hit it off again, and went on to Burnhopeside, through the covert, and finally were run out of scent at West Langley.

It was thought at the time that the fox must have got to ground in the Burnhopeside earths, and hounds had gone on with a fresh fox from this North Durham covert, but the point was never decided. At the same time, they were running very hard when they went into Burnhopeside, and when they emerged on the Durham side of the covert the pace had gone, and, though they had a line for a mile or two, they were probably hunting a different fox, which had gone on to Lord Durham's Langley coverts beyond. This was a great hunt in point of distance and the amount of country covered, and I think I am right in saying that no one saw it all through, simply because after the first circle the field remained on the west side of the Pont, expecting hounds to go up or down the gill, while in reality they had gone straight through and were quickly out of sight. I missed the first part, but was one of the half-dozen who saw what fishmongers call the middle bit, and I never had such an awkward ride in my life. The Master was also there and the second whipper-in, but the huntsman had been hung up by wire at Medomsley, and was for the time an absentee. In that part of the hunt, which lasted an hour, we crossed half a dozen colliery railways, were stopped by wire more than

once, and had to find our way through two colliery villages. But the ground was bare everywhere, and hounds had to work for the line all the time, and thus we were able to keep near them until we reached a place named Straightneck Wood, on the return journey. There we had to lead over a chasm and a wired tram line, and when we got clear of what would be better called Crooked Neck Wood, hounds were three-quarters of a mile ahead, and the field, who had waited for a whole hour, were with them. However, we caught them up at Greencroft, and saw the end. The pace from the Pont to Burnhopeside was very fast, and at the Moor Leazes check two horses were so beaten that their riders had to get off and lead them to Lanchester, where they were left for the night. In all there were fifteen riders at the end, including three or four ladies, and I may add that the country covered in the latter part of the run was just as good as that encountered in the middle part was bad. But in all my experience I never knew of a fox going from the Pont into the Tanfield country except on this particular occasion, and on nineteen Pont days out of twenty hounds never go near a colliery or colliery village.

Immediately below the Pont Gill, where the Pont stream reaches the Derwent, there are some wooded banks, and at times a Pont fox will take hounds along these banks to the Gibside coverts, which are on the same side of the stream, but several miles lower down. Indeed, the East Lodge at Gibside is no more than half a dozen miles from Newcastle, and for the Gibside coverts hounds meet at Gibside Hall, Rowlands Gill, or the Gibside Watergate. The principal coverts on the estate, which is owned by Lord Strathmore, are the West Wood and Snipes Dean, and the West Wood is usually the first draw and a certain find. There are, however, many pitfalls from old mine workings hereabouts, and foxes usually cross the park to Snipes Dean, though occasionally one goes into the open on the south side. Snipes Dean is a beautiful covert, but not noted for great runs, and, as a rule, there is much riding up and down the rides, a great deal of covert hunting, and unless a fox crosses the Derwent, no great amount of sport. Parts of the covert, too, are bad scenting ground, so much so, indeed, that when a fox is

brought into the covert from the north side of the Derwent it is almost impossible to drive him through. It has been done, but very occasionally, and I can think of only two fine hunts which went right through Gibside. The first, at which I was not present, occurred some fifteen years ago with a fox found at Crawcrook Whin, near Ryton, and within a mile of the Tyne. This fox crossed the country to the Derwent, and went right through Gibside to the Ravensworth coverts, hounds making a seven-mile point. The other case I have in mind was a fox from the Pont, which was hunted to Gibside, and then right back to the Pont, and killed on the main earths, which were, of course, stopped. The Ravensworth coverts, three or four miles east of Gibside, are not drawn in these days; but there is a covert between the two places called the Carrot Beds, and one or two little spinneys in the same neighbourhood, at which a fox is occasionally found. Before mentioning the coverts in this neighbourhood on the opposite side of the river I may state that there is a bit of outlying country, belonging to the Braes of Derwent Hunt, some four or five miles due south of Gibside, with coverts at Causey, Beamish Park, and Urpeth. The Causey covert is a picturesque glen, or would be picturesque if it were not for the fact that it is situated in a colliery neighbourhood. Not long ago I saw a print of "Causey Arch, in the County of Durham," in a printseller's window in High Holborn, and this was dated more than a hundred years back, and depicts the aforesaid arch, which was really a waggon-way or tramline used for carrying coal. The covert is of no value in these days, but the coverts round Beamish Hall are excellent, and, as a rule, well foxed. Hounds meet at Beamish Hall once a year, and the trouble usually is that the foxes know no country and never go far afield. I have seen one fair day from Beamish in perhaps half a dozen visits, but there were always plenty of foxes to hunt. Urpeth lies even further south and east, and is sometimes visited on a Beamish day; but the country all round is too populous for hunting, and Beamish, with its deer park and well-kept coverts, is really an oasis in a desert of coal mining.

The country east of the kennels and north of the Derwent is perhaps as productive of sport as any in the hunt, in spite

of the fact that it contains several collieries. It is hardly of the same character as the western part of the hunt, the white land and all grass of the west being replaced by farms which are partly arable and partly grass, where the inclosures are much smaller and most of the land at a lower level. Neither are the coverts, with the exception of Chopwell Wood, anything like so big as those of Healey or Kellas, for example, and, in brief, it is a good country to get about in, and on nine days out of ten carries a fair scent. Ebchester on the Derwent, and Stockfield on the Tyne form the boundaries between east and west, and opposite Ebchester is the Heugh Wood, and east of it a fine whin covert in the open, on Broadoak Farm. Hard by is Milkwell Burn Wood, a first-rate covert, which not many years ago was drawn fifteen times in succession and was never blank. There are two gills in this covert and two or three spurs, but it is a good hearing covert, and at times has provided capital sport. Its foxes either go to Chopwell, over the hill to the Prudhoe coverts, or to the Hollins, and there is a good chance of sport in each of these directions, but the Chopwell line is the worst. At odd times, too, they cross the river and run to the Pont, and some three or four years ago a fox took hounds to Shotley Bridge Station many miles away, and then went to ground on Elm Park Farm, less than a mile from the kennels. The worst of Milkwell Burn is that in mid-season the rides are for the most part deep, but even this has its advantages, for if hounds leave the covert when the field is congregated on the open space in the centre they have time to settle nicely, and are in no fear of being over-ridden, for the riders must detour a little, probably in single file, and almost certainly in deep going. I have often thought it should be the best plan to keep outside the covert on the north side; but the spurs shoot up into the fields beyond, and are so short of crossings that it has been the custom for long enough to follow hounds into this covert, and keep as near them as possible when they are running, for a peculiarity of the covert is that most of its foxes allow themselves to be well hunted inside the wood before they take to the open. Chopwell, the best Derwentside covert to the east of Milkwell Burn, is ten times the size of the latter, but foxes break from it most readily, and at times give capital hunts.



This Chopwell is Crown property, and is doubtless the original of "Pinch Me Near" Forest. It is about 1200 acres in extent, but much of it is very bare, and through the greater part of it hounds travel as fast as they do in the open country. Time was, not many years ago, when the shooting was in the hands of the Master's family, and when Mr Priestman first took the hounds much of the covert was far thicker than it now is, and there would be three separate colonies of foxes in different quarters. Now there is a colliery railroad through the north side, a large and comparatively new colliery village at the north-west corner of the wood, and much of the acreage has been given over to the forestry department of the Armstrong College at Newcastle-on-Tyne. There are many wide rides, all good going everywhere, but since the new element was introduced it is not unusual to find a square of the forest freshly wired round, and, in fact, the place has become much more difficult to hunt and awkward to get about in. But still there are three portions of the wood much liked of foxes, namely, the steep banks of the river near Lintz Ford, a small, young plantation in the centre, and the extreme north-easterly corner of the covert—beyond which there is an open whin covert known as Bone Hill. From this whin there came five seasons ago a remarkably fine hunt. Whether the fox was found in the covert or the whin beyond I hardly know, but hounds had a line out of the covert and into the whin, and the fox was then viewed a quarter of a mile beyond the whin. It was after two o'clock, in the short days, but all the field were there, and hounds ran so fast over Horsegate and Broomfield farms that there was soon a big tail of riders. Going parallel with the Lead road—which hereabouts is on the ridge of the hill—they reached Airy Hill, and here they checked in a field full of sheep and cattle, where were also two men throwing turnips from a cart. Just as hounds checked the fox was viewed again, now two fields in front. But hounds hit it off themselves, and, leaving Hedley Hill on their right, ran to the Duke's Rush, thence to Kipper Linn and Watch Hill. Here a fresh fox took away two or three couples; but the body of the pack never hesitated, and went on through Fotherly Gill, over the great pastures of Broomley, and stopped for a moment at some

rabbit holes in an open field on High Shilford Farm. This was the second check, and hounds were quickly going again, and ran down to the Tyne, where they were stopped when about to cross the river, being, in fact, out on a gravel bed when they were reached. It was now nearly four o'clock, and far too late for a foray into the Tynedale country, even with such a wonderful scent as this was. Hounds had made a nine-mile point, had never been in covert except twice for a few minutes when crossing the Duke's Rush and Fotherly Gill, and the field had fined down to nine, three of whom were ladies. Personally, I have good reason to remember this run, for just before the finish I had a most lucky escape from all sorts of dangers. After leaving Fotherly Gill I was alone on the left of hounds. Across one of these fields runs a small open brook, and this had been swollen by a recent thaw, and as I was crossing it the ground gave way, and a moment later I was on my back in the stream with the water coming over my face and my horse lying over my thighs and pinning me down. I could not move, and was on the point of being choked by the water when the horse rolled over and got up without touching me, and all that I suffered from was being wet through, with a ten-mile ride home in prospect.

When it is intended to draw Chopwell hounds usually meet at Armonside or Lintz Ford, but, as I have explained, the covert may also be the afternoon draw from the Low Spen, or even from a Long Close Gate (on the south of the river) meet. Wilds Hill, a forty-acre plantation just east of Chopwell, is an occasional find, but the best and most sporting covert in this locality is Spen Bank, which has a lengthy gill to the north. Spen Bank has all sorts of lying except heather, and faces south, while the greater part of it is very dry. But its chief feature is that foxes leave it quickly and that there are nice riding lines on almost every side. Foxes generally go eastwards towards the Engine Wood, or, if not headed on the railway, over the hill to Martins Wood and the Blaydon Burn coverts. This heading on the railway is the chief and only trouble which there is about Spen Banks. At the top of the covert there is a colliery line, and when hounds draw the covert the miners take up a position on the railway for the express purpose of viewing a fox. If they (the miners) only keep

together in a group half a dozen foxes may leave the covert on this side; but these enthusiasts have a habit of straggling, and in consequence many foxes are headed here and sent back to covert in the course of every season. All the same, many good hunts come from Spen Bank every year, more especially perhaps when it is an afternoon draw not anticipated by the miners of Spen village. There is a nice whin covert a mile further east, and a capital cover beyond named Thornley Burn, an old oak plantation which, though there is a road at either end, is well secluded. This covert has a good reputation for sport, while at Land Wood, just beyond, there used often to be a fox, but I have not been there for several seasons. Axwell Park, the most eastern covert in the hunt, generally shelters a breed, but they are difficult to hunt, for there is a deer park within the estate, and a great deal of beech in the coverts, which are, on the whole, bad scenting ground. I have seen many good hunts which ended at Axwell, but few which had their beginning at these coverts, and the fact seems to be that if a fox is found inside Axwell—which is surrounded by a high wall—he is disinclined to leave the park and its environs, while a fox which belongs to Axwell and is bred elsewhere will make straight for the park, and will know where he can scratch his way up the wall. When this happens—and it does happen fairly often—hounds have to be taken in at one of the gates, and then back to where the fox came in, and this generally means that the fox had the best of it afterwards. I have seen similar places in many hunts, and my experience is that where a park wall is too high for hounds the fox is generally lost. But I have a vivid recollection of one fox, who entered Axwell on the west side, was hunted through the park, and emerged on the Scotswood side, ran on to the Tyne, and attempted to cross within a quarter of a mile of Scotswood Bridge. He was drowned in midstream, recovered from a boat, and broken up in the field adjoining the Newcastle to Carlisle Railway. Axwell has lately been bought with a view to building.

West of Axwell, less than a couple of miles away, is Blaydon Burn, long the residence of the late Colonel Cowen, and until twelve years ago the home of his son, Mr J. E. Cowen, who now resides at Minsteracres. Colonel Cowen's kennels were

here during the latter part of his mastership, and the place, though quite near a good deal of industrialism, is very snug, with a good covert called Brockwell Wood, not a quarter of a mile from the house. A mile beyond is Chickens Wood, and beyond it Reely Mires, and, though all three are little places, they furnish a great deal of sport, for cubs are always bred at the Brockwell, and in most years at Reely Mires as well. Then on the north side of Blaydon Burn there is a strong, inclosed gorse covert, known as Cowen's Whin. The country hereabouts is very open, for the Blaydon Burn coverts are in the open valley of the Barlow brook, and well away from the collieries, while on the north side of the valley there is a broad plateau of farm land, with no covert in it beyond Cowen's Whin. I have seen foxes come from all parts of the country to Blaydon Burn, many which have gone to Axwell; but if any of these foxes have come from a distant point the earths at the Brockwell have generally given them shelter. From Axwell itself the best hunt I ever saw came late in the afternoon. We had run a fox into the park, and were there for at least an hour, there being several lines. At length hounds found the line of a fox which had left near the Axwell Spa, and here there is a gate, which came in handy, so that no time was lost. The hunt which followed was not a fast one, but it took hounds over a great deal of country, and lasted all the afternoon, terminating in a kill on one of the main rides of Chopwell Wood and hard by what once was the official residence of "Mr Prettyfat." From Chopwell the best run I ever saw—and the best days I ever heard of in this country—took place on Jan. 9, 1904, and is described in *The Foxhounds of Great Britain* as follows: "Hounds met at Horsegate (adjoining Chopwell), found immediately, and ran for three hours, always driving on with a holding scent, and always in the open. In fact, in a run which was reckoned to be quite twenty-five miles, they only crossed through two strips of plantation. Later in the day, with a greatly attenuated field, they ran over the very best of their country for one hour and twenty-five minutes, and hounds were never handled until they had been running for an hour and a quarter. In this run there was a point of about eight miles; but the first run was circular, and, though hounds

travelled from the Derwent to the Tyne and back, the finish was within three miles of the find." This, as I have said, was almost if not quite the best day I ever had with Mr. Priestman's pack, for scent was extraordinarily good, and both foxes something quite out of the common. There is a narrow plantation on Horsegate Farm, two fields away from Chopwell, and I seem to recollect that the first fox was found there, and not in Chopwell itself. That, however, is of little consequence. What I remember is that he only skirted the north side of the covert, and worked round in a wide sweep over the Barlow country to the Tyne near Prudhoe. Still bending round, hounds came right back to the Derwent, close to Rowlands Gill Station, and, turning again, sent their fox to ground in the artificial earth in Bradley Dene, which earth was made by Mr Owen Wallis when he resided at Bradley Hall some thirty years ago. The great thing about this run was the pace; there were checks, of course, for there must be in a hunt which lasts three hours, but the pace was always good. The country rode light, in spite of the run taking place in January, and horses were all beat at the end. In fact, only those who had second horses out stayed on for the afternoon hunt, which came from Hyons Wood, in that part of the eastern country which has yet to be described. Hyons Wood is in a small valley, and the bigger part of the covert is on the south side of the brook which runs through it. As a rule, the field go up the open part of the wood on this south side, and on this occasion several of them followed the usual plan, while a few remained in the cartway which goes through the north end of the covert. The fox broke on this side, and hounds were away so fast that they had topped the hill called Mickley Moor before those on the south side had time to reach the bottom of the covert, and none of this contingent ever saw hounds again. Meantime the pack turned left-handed just beyond the summit of the hill, and ran over a fine grass country, with not a single covert in it, until they reached Apperley Dene, where the fox was headed just as he was on the point of entering Fotherly Gill. He then went down the valley through Hindley to the village of Stocksfield, where he was lost in the darkness. It was afterwards discovered that he had crouched on the wheel of an old water-mill, and he



was found there about six o'clock and driven away, hounds having gone home more than an hour before. Hounds were never touched except when the fox was headed, and then the lady who had headed him was able to say where he had gone, and they hit it off in a moment. During the latter part of this afternoon hunt the field fined down to less than half a dozen, the pace being too good for any but fresh horses with plenty of breeding.

The north-east quarter of the Braes of Derwent country is productive of a lot of sport, and, in fact, it shares the honours in the matter of providing good hunts with the south-western quarter. The Healey country on the north-west and the lower part of the Derwent Valley, say, from the Pont to Gibside inclusive, are so thickly wooded that much of the hunting is covert work; but the north-eastern corner of the hunt is remarkably open, as is the country between the Shotley or the Sneep Coverts and Minsteracres. Blaydon Burn was always a popular meet, but hounds have hereabouts for many years been handicapped by the great number of foot people who seize the points of vantage, confine the movements, and thwart the intentions of foxes, and yet who are just as keen on the sport as the members of the hunt. These men are mostly miners not at work at the moment, and their presence in really great numbers in this, as in one or two other parts of the country, not only testifies to the popularity of the sport, but brings a democratic element into the hunting field, which in these rather peculiar times is undoubtedly all for the best. Anyhow, there is a sympathetic feeling of considerable intensity between the regular hunting people and the foot crowd, which is only in evidence at certain east country meets of the pack, and the farmers in this particular corner of the world are so accustomed to trespass that they do not seem to mind. As a matter of fact, the crowd collects in groups where there is a really good view, and remains pretty well in one place, unless, indeed, a fox is killed or run to ground near it. I am inclined to think that these crowds do not damage the fences, and certainly they cannot hurt the pasture land in winter time; not long ago a large farmer, whose holding lies between a colliery and a covert, told me that he was far more troubled by the blackberry pickers in September than he ever

was by a visit from the hounds, though in the latter case there might be hundreds of men standing about on the higher parts of his land. When hounds are done with any covert or group of coverts in a colliery neighbourhood, and move off to another part of the country, the crowd of foot people imperceptibly melts away, and in half an hour's time the country will be as quiet as on an ordinary day. There are perhaps half a dozen regular foot followers with the Braes of Derwent, all of whom come from the ranks of miners; but these make a business of hunting, especially on Saturdays, when in normal times the pits are not working, and these men walk long distances, and even travel by train to the station nearest a meet, and follow hounds throughout the day. These men, as will be understood, have considerable knowledge of hunting, and are frequently puppy walkers, while, if they happen to live near a covert, they will do all they can to keep that covert quiet, especially if it contains a breeding earth.

It is, I think, a fact that in a hunting country where there is industrialism also the hunt is helped in many little ways by certain of the wage-earners. The *modus operandi* is perhaps not very easy to explain, but both in the North Durham and the Braes of Derwent country there are miners who do a great deal to further the sport, and for no reward beyond the feeling that they are in some degree helping the hunt. As puppy walkers, amateur watchers, and occasional earth stoppers—especially when ground has fallen in owing to colliery workings—they do a great deal for the hunt in the course of the year, and if anything happens (possibly with regard to foxes) in any particular neighbourhood which affects the hunt in the slightest degree someone visits the kennels at the earliest possible moment with information which at times is of value. When hunting in a peculiarly agricultural district, I have seen labourers who did not even turn their heads when fox, hounds, and “field” passed over the inclosure in which they were working; but, as far as I have been able to judge, the average north country working man, whether a miner, an agricultural labourer, or employed in quite another capacity, has a certain amount of sport in his composition.

I have no wish to lay down any hard and fixed line on this particular subject, but I am fairly certain that this love of sport obtains greatly in some countries, and is almost non-existent in others. It is perhaps as strongly marked on Exmoor as anywhere else, for it is impossible to ride home from any hunt with the Devon and Somerset Staghounds without being asked by every man, woman, and child if the stag was taken, and, if so, where the stag was taken. I once amused myself by counting the number of questioners on a ride from Dulverton to Porlock Weir, and, though I have forgotten the number, it was very large, and, probably because it was not very late in the afternoon, most of the inquirers were women, standing at the cottage doors. In the north one is questioned in just the same way during a ride home from hunting, the query being made by all of the children and most of the labourers one meets going home from work; but the interest does not extend to the women as it does on Exmoor. In Surrey, too, the countryside is very anxious to know where the stag was taken, and seems hardly able to understand that one may have been hunting with foxhounds when the staghounds were out. I remember riding with two friends through the village of Blethingley after a day with the Burstow many years ago, on a particularly gloomy evening, when a voice came out of the darkness asking where the stag was taken. "Brighton," answered one of our party, and as quick as lightning came the rejoinder, "You're a —— liar!" "Dill ye kill, mister?" or "How many foxes have ye catched?" is what the school children ask in these northern hunts, and if the homeward ride happens to take in a village or two the query is so frequent as to become most wearing. And *à propos*, riding through a village on a dark night; during a day's hunting in the Braes of Derwent country at the time of the South African War, a hound which had been lame in the morning had been taken by a whipper-in to a village half a mile off, to be picked up after the sport was over. As it happened, the whipper-in was new to the country, and when we reached the village (I was going home with hounds) he could not locate the cottage he had left the hound at owing to the darkness. One or two inquiries were fruitless, and at length someone shouted a question as to whether anyone knew where the hound was. "What's

the dog's name?" was asked by a man standing in the road. "Tangible," replied the huntsman. "There's no dog of that name here. All the dogs in this village is called Bobs, except one, and he's Buller."

There is still one small portion of the Braes of Derwent country to be described, and this is generally known as the Prudhoe country. This district is in the Tyne Valley, between Ryton and Stocksfield, and except for one big covert, called the Guards Wood, is very open. West of the Blaydon Burn coverts is Martins Wood, a ten-acre plantation, with four or five acres of gorse outside. It often holds a fox, as does the Quakers Wood, a little over a mile to the north of Martins Wood, and where the lying is chiefly blackberry bushes. North of these, and nearer the Tyne is Crawcrook Whin, an occasional find, and on the low ground beyond, Bradley Dene, a wooded ravine which winds round Bradley Hall, and where a litter is usually bred. The western part of this covert is locally known as Stanley Burn, and it is at times a bad covert to get away from, for the bank is too steep to allow of any crossing, and thus either those on one side or those on the other are favoured, and one portion of the field must ride to one of the ends of the Dene in order to get round. And after many years of seeing it drawn I have no strong opinion as to whether it is best to be on the east or the west side, for foxes break either way, though as a rule they do not leave the Dene until they have reached one of the ends. The high road from Newcastle-on-Tyne to Hexham crosses Stanley Burn half a mile west of Bradley Hall, and separates the property from the Prudhoe Hall estate on which are three famous coverts—French's Close, the Guards Wood, and Hyons Wood. The two first named are joined by a strip of woodland, and the Guards Wood is a beautiful covert, secluded in a fold of the hills, remote from population, and as a rule very well foxed. There are good rides, too, and an occupation farm road all along the western side, while the country to the south and west is wild and open. At times foxes from the Guards go over to Milkwell Burn in the Derwent Valley, and I have seen hounds cross the ridge of the hill between these two coverts—which are three or four miles apart—five times in one day. At times also they go east to the Blaydon Burn district, and they also go to

Chopwell, or to the Duke's Rush, near Whittonstall. Occasionally they will hang to the Prudhoe Coverts and Bradley Dene close by; but on the whole they are travellers, and good runs from the Guards or from Hyons Wood are of fairly frequent occurrence. Hyons Wood was for a time a rabbit warren, and is a trappy place to ride through, on account of half-concealed open water cuts. It lies in another fold of the hills, a mile west of the Guards, and is even more isolated. But parts of the covert are damp lying, and it is not so certain a find as its neighbour. It was the starting place of the fine hunt of Jan 9, 1904, to which I lately referred. Before leaving the Prudhoe coverts I may mention that for many years they were the property of Mr. John Liddell, whose eldest son, Capt. John Aidan Liddell, won the Victoria Cross, and unfortunately succumbed to his injuries after having performed one of the most brilliant and dangerous feats of the great war. The Liddell family were good fox preservers at Prudhoe, but now the estate—or some part of it—has been bought by the county council, and Prudhoe Hall has been, or is being, turned into an institution of sorts.



### CHAPTER III.

#### THE HAYDON COUNTRY.

The Haydon Hunt, which joins the Braes of Derwent country on the north-west, is more than one hundred years old, for it was in existence as long ago as 1809. It was in those days a trencher-fed harrier pack, and I have not been able to fix the date when the hunt whipped off from hare to fox. I have, however, mentioned that I had seen a scarlet coat, with a Gothic arched stand-up collar which had belonged to a member of the Lee family of Land Ends, near Haydon Bridge, and which it is thought was made between 1830 and 1840. The scarlet colour suggests that fox was then hunted by the Haydon, but on the buttons were the letters H.H. and a running hare, and this makes one incline to the opinion that eighty years ago some of the members of the Haydon went hare hunting in scarlet. I may here mention that hare hunting in scarlet has occasionally been the fashion in certain countries, more particularly perhaps where there were no foxhounds in the same neighbourhood. Even now scarlet is occasionally worn by the officials of harrier packs, and, for example, the Master of the Thanet and Herne "wears a red coat," while the huntsman and whippers-in of the Vale of Lune are always clothed in scarlet. A little later than the days of the coat referred to Mr. Nicholas Maughan was hunting a pack of foxhounds in the Slaley district, but whether the foxhound pack was a distinct establishment and the Haydon pack was still hunting a little further west I do not know, nor have the many inquiries I have made thrown any trustworthy light on the subject. Mr. Maughan's first pack, which, I believe, hunted entirely

on the south side of the Tyne were called the Slaley, but whether this was merely a local appellation I do not know. What is certain is that the pack in question was a forerunner of the Tynedale, for in 1845 Mr. Maughan took in what is now the Tynedale country and held office for nine years, giving way to Major Bell in 1854. When this happened Mr. Lambert, of Elrington, became Master of the Haydon, and this bears out the idea that, although Mr. Maughan's earliest pack was called the Slaley, it was in reality the Haydon. Mr. Lambert was succeeded by a committee in 1850, Mr. George Lee, of Threepwood, being one of its leading members, and this state of affairs existed for many years; but in 1875 Major Blackett Ord, of Whitfield, was made Master, and held office for five seasons of capital sport. It was during this mastership that I came in for a capital hunt with the Haydon, and the curious part of it was that I was on a business expedition, and had no idea of hunting when I left home. As a matter of fact, I had an appointment at Hexham with the late Mr. Joseph Lee, of Land Ends, and as Hexham was thirty miles—with a wait at a junction—from Shotley Bridge by rail, and just half the distance by road, I decided to ride. I had looked at the Haydon meets, knowing it was one of their hunting days, but the place of meeting, given in the local paper, was not within my knowledge, and I imagined it must be on the far side of the country. As a matter of fact it was a farmhouse close to Slaley, and a mile beyond the village just named I came upon hounds running a fox, and joined them. They had come out of Dipton Wood, and there was a rare scent, which took them to Dukesfield, thence over some rough country to Riddlehamhope, and back right-handed to West Dipton. They then went on up the Tyne Valley, a mile or two south of the river, and killed there, at no great distance from Haydon Bridge.

This was a long and fine hunt, but it was thought that there had been at least one change of foxes. I need hardly say that I failed to keep my appointment, and I had a ride home of something like twenty miles. Major Blackett Ord was followed in the mastership of the Haydon by a younger Mr. Nicholas Maughan, a son of the first Master of the Tynedale, and who was a horsey rather than a hound man. During the

three seasons of Mr. Maughan's mastership the Master and men were splendidly mounted, but I never heard much of the sport, and as the hounds were sold in a single lot for £15 when Mr. Maughan resigned I imagine it was not very grand. One thing which happened, however, I shall never forget. The Tynedale were advertised to meet at Dilston, and the Haydon at Traveller's Rest. The two places are several miles apart, but a great deal of the country between them is filled up with an enormous tract of woodland, called East Dipton. It should be explained that, strictly speaking, this is Tynedale country, being a part of the district hunted by the Slaley pack of the elder Mr. Maughan when that gentleman took over the Tynedale country. But at times there had been a little friction, and Mr. Maughan was under the impression he had a right to the country. I may say here that an arrangement has long since been concluded by which the Haydon have the country all through the best part of the season, while the Tynedale go there in the early autumn and late spring. But nearly forty years ago no understanding had been arrived at, and the country was claimed by both packs. On the day I have in mind the Haydon met half an hour or possibly a whole hour earlier than the Tynedale, and I had gone with a friend to meet the latter pack, who proceeded to draw East Dipton from the Dilston end of the covert. The Haydon, it appeared, had been put into the same huge covert at the other end, and after a while the two packs met, no fox having been found. The Master of the Tynedale was not present, but as it happened the two "fields" suddenly met in an open space, and then for ten minutes there was a terrible row. The Haydon Master was most anxious to fight someone, and for a time it really looked as if he would be accommodated. But a *deus ex machina* appeared in the person of the most popular man in the district, and he succeeded in calming the passions which had been roused, and both packs went on drawing until the road was reached at Linnolds Bridge, when the two packs were "drawn" and each hunt proceeded on its way. The chief actors in this scene have all joined the great majority, but I have thought it best to mention no names, and doubtless many of the hunting people of Tyneside will remember the incident. Poor Maughan, who died when quite a young man,

was, I remember, beautifully mounted that day, and not long afterwards his horses were disposed of at auction, when one brought £500, and all the others good prices. He had a capital eye for a horse, and if I recollect rightly he sent two or three lots of horses to be sold in London, when big prices were always realised. When Mr. Maughan gave up in 1884 another committee took hold, and for a couple of seasons the hounds were known as the "Roman Wall." Then Mr. Edward Joicey, of Blenkinsopp Castle and Newbiggen House, the last-named place being situated at the head of the Derwent Valley, a mile and a half west of Blanchland, took the hounds, at first in partnership with Mr. Loftus Dixon Brown, and afterwards single-handed. Mr. Joicey held office from 1886 to 1895, and soon got a smart pack together, with which he showed capital sport. Indeed, the hunt was notable for smartness at this period of its existence; but unfortunately for the country, Mr. Joicey resigned, and his resignation was followed by a partial collapse. The farmers, however, came to the rescue, and a short pack was got together again, which was called the Hexhamshire and Haydon, and of which a man named William Archer was huntsman. This Archer was a really fine natural huntsman, whose opportunities had been limited, and who, nevertheless, continued to show capital sport at times. He was at his best on the "fells" (as the moors are locally called), and was a bold, determined rider, in thorough sympathy with his hounds. He was popular with the farmers, too. But substantial support was lacking, and in 1889 there was another change, the late Major Harvey Scott taking the mastership, and holding it until 1902, though during a part of the time the Master was absent at the Boer War, when his brother, Mr. J. O. Scott, acted in his place. In 1902 Mr. C. T. Maling succeeded Major Harvey Scott, and some years ago was joined by Mr. A. M. Allgood, and under the joint mastership the Haydon was a flourishing hunt, with a first-rate pack of hounds. Mr. Maling introduced fresh blood into the kennel, and took the greatest pains with his hound breeding, and in Mr. Allgood he found a partner who was equally enthusiastic, and who was, moreover, after a long experience with harriers, a first-rate amateur huntsman. Capt. Keith is now Master of the Haydon.

The three countries of which I have written, viz., the North Durham, the Braes of Derwent, and the Haydon, are, as regards the land over which hounds hunt, about as unlike the average Midland hunt as it is possible to be, and the great difference is caused by the fact that each hunt is located in a hilly district, in which the flat plain is conspicuous by its absence. There are plains and plains, and those who are acquainted with Salisbury Plain, for example, are well aware that the so-called plain is undulating everywhere, with a variation in places of many hundred feet in height. But in the particular part of the north of England in which these hunts are located it is difficult to find a flat field, let alone a flat district, and in place of the undulations of the Midlands there are real hills, which do not in the least interfere with the hunting. Chiefly because they cross the country—most frequently from east to west—in ranges, and slope very gradually towards the top of each range. The really abrupt places are few and far between, and, curiously enough, such places are abrupt on one side only. Thus the village of Cornsay, a favourite meet of the North Durham, is about 1,000ft. above sea level, and while it is reached by quite a gentle ascent from the Durham side, the rise from the Browney Valley, on the west, is exceedingly steep. Grey Mare Hill, in the Braes of Derwent country, is just the same, abrupt on the north for nearly half a mile, and so gradual on the south side that carriage horses—when such things were used—would trot to the top as a matter of course. Such flat, or perhaps less hilly, land as there is in these hunts is to be found in the Wear Valley part of the North Durham; but there is no flat land in the Braes of Derwent country, and as far as my memory goes next to none in the Haydon Hunt. Then, too, each of the three hunts joins the moors, and whereas all of the Haydon country is wild and thinly populated, this description also applies to the better half of the North Durham, and to the western and larger part of the Braes of Derwent. I have made some mention of these physical characteristics of the countries before, but have referred to the subject again because a correspondent has written to ask if “it is not true that nearly all the hunting with the North Durham and Braes of Derwent is on the grouse moors?” In reply to this, I can



only repeat what I have said before, viz., that though the grouse moors form the western border of all three hunts, hounds seldom go there, and if by any chance a fox does "take to the fells," he, as a rule, quickly leaves the heather again if scent is really good. Personally, I have hunted whole seasons with the two packs, North Durham and Braes of Derwent, and have never been on the moors with the first named, and perhaps twice in the full season with the other pack, which, by the way, has more "moor-edge" country than its neighbour. The Haydon country I do not know enough about in this particular to be decided, but perhaps my correspondent—who writes from "somewhere in France"—will be interested to learn that for over a hundred and fifty miles many of the packs which hunt on the eastern side of England have moors for their western boundary. This applies to the North Northumberland, Coquetdale, Percy, Morpeth, Tynedale, The Zetland, Bedale, Bramham Moor, Badsworth, and Barlow, as well as the hounds in co. Durham, while, in addition, such packs as the Cleveland, Sinnington, and the "Derwent" in Yorkshire are in exactly the same case. The Hurworth, too, reach the moors at times, for in North Yorkshire there are two lines of moorland, one near the sea, and the other on the western side of the country; but what I have written as to hounds seldom going to the moors in the county of Durham probably holds good in a great degree with regard to all the other packs I have mentioned, and I have long ago come to the conclusion that in an ordinary way foxes find they cannot travel so well through the heather as they can on the grass land which almost invariably joins it. I remember once going to the Bramham Moor at Beckwithshaw, when they quickly ran on to moors, and throughout a longish day they were seldom off the heather, and this was probably due to the fact that a few miles of heather separate the valleys of the Wharfe and Nidd, and the foxes hunted were probably in the habit of travelling across the heather country between.

In the South Durham hunt there is no moorland whatever, the country over which Lord Boyne hunts being separated from the moors by the northern portion of the Zetland hunt; but there are certain hunts in the north of England whose countries are almost entirely moorland, and perhaps the best

known and most successful of these is the Border, of which Mr. Jacob Robson has been for many years Master or joint Master. Mr. Robson describes his country as "chiefly moorland," and though he has some nice vale country in the neighbourhood of Bellingham, a majority of his big hunts—of which he has many in the course of every season—take place on the moors. Possibly my soldier correspondent has been confusing the Border with the Braes of Derwent. Another moorland country is the North Tyne, immediately south of the Border. There are also in Yorkshire the Goathland, Farndale, Stainton Dale, and Bilsdale, which are not entirely but to a great extent moorland packs, while many of the Welsh packs have a great deal of moorland country, as have some of the Devon packs. Indeed, I have spent one or two whole days on the heather with the Exmoor, which, I need hardly say, have their country inside that of the Devon and Somerset Staghound country.

The occasional moorland hunting I have seen in the north of England has seldom been satisfactory from a rider's point of view, chiefly because of the soft places which are to be found on all moors in winter time, and also because the various inclosures are in these days—wherever I have been—separated by wire. The actual bog occurs at times, but it is boggy land rather than a distinct bog which pulls one up, and which at times will carry a man, but not a horse with a rider on his back. To get off and lead, or to turn away and look for sounder ground, is the only thing to be done, and a procession of ladies leading their horses through a few acres of very soft going has its comic side. At times, however, especially when the heather has been recently burnt, the going is found to be both firm and good; but, if possible, cart tracks should be used, and until one rides over moors it is difficult to realise what a considerable number of these cart tracks there are. Sheep tracks generally show where the ground is sound, but it is hopeless work following hounds that are running hard on a sheep track, for the sheep track will twist about and make a quarter of a mile into double the distance. A fox which goes straight on to the moors is probably a moorland fox who knows his way, and, generally speaking, both Mr. Priestman and Mr. Rogerson will have hounds stopped (if possible) from

following a fresh fox which points at once for the moors. On the other hand, it is occasionally the case that a fox found in one of the valleys below the moors will make an excursion on to the heather after he has been well hunted; but when this happens he usually just skirts the heather for a mile or two and quickly leaves it again. My experience also is that in the north scent lies well on the heather if the fox is not far in front, but not for so long as on grass if he has been gone some time. I have noticed hounds run a fox hard on grass land for twenty minutes or so, and then slow down on reaching the heather more than once, and I have also seen hounds just able to pick a line across a corner of moor, and on reaching the grass beyond go away with a scream. I have also seen many well-hunted foxes lost after they reached the moor, and once or twice, on really good scenting days, I have seen hounds go almost as fast over the heather as they had been doing on the grass; but over a long period of years I can recall very few—certainly not more than three or four—foxes actually pulled down in the heather after they had been well hunted. In recent years—before the war, of course—if the Braes of Derwent hounds ran a Sneepe fox on to the moors it became customary for a big majority of the field to remain on the nearest road and wait for the pack being brought back, and I am strongly of opinion that in a country where the moors are merely a boundary of the hunt, and not included in the country to be drawn, this is much the best plan to adopt. Riding over the moors is not popular with the crowd, and where there is plenty of country elsewhere it is waste of time to hunt there, unless, indeed, a really well-run fox takes hounds on to moorland after a big spell of inland hunting, and this, as I have explained, is a not very common occurrence.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TYNEDALE COUNTRY.

I have mentioned that the Tynedale country has a border of moorland, but this is very small, and, I imagine, seldom reached. The particular part of the country which joins the moors is the north-western corner of the hunt—where it marches with the Border country—and where at odd times hounds go on to the heather after having met at such places as Kirkharle or Kirkwhelpington. I have indeed a recollection of the pack running a fox to Simonside, near Rothbury, many years ago, and not being recovered until the following day; but that was many years ago, and I cannot find the newspaper cutting in which the run was described. And before I attempt some account of the Tynedale I must put it on record that, though only a three days a week pack, the Tynedale is one of the great hunts of the kingdom. It is, indeed, great in every way. To begin with, it possesses a magnificent country from almost every point of view. It has now, and has had for many years past, one of the finest packs of hounds in the world, and it has always enjoyed mastership of the most competent description. Its style of hunting is a model to other countries, and it has the loyal support of a large and enthusiastic countryside, the result being that at normal times fields are always large—probably on the whole larger than any to be found farther north than the York and Ainsty country. Thursdays with the Zetland used to attract very large fields—perhaps (before the war) not quite so large since the pack became a subscription one—and Friday meets on the York side of the Bramham Moor country were always very largely attended; but I am inclined to think that the Tynedale

Mondays and Fridays were quite as big, even in the worst of weather, and some seasons ago when hounds were drawing at two o'clock in the afternoon I counted sixty ladies (including little girls) and thirty-seven scarlet coats. Once, by the way, and I think about fifteen years ago, I counted seventy scarlets with the Zetland. This was while the first covert was being drawn after a Halnaby meet, but I remember making a mental note at the time to the effect that, though ladies were numerous, they were not in such numbers as were to be seen with the Tynedale about the same period of time. It has frequently been said that if the Tynedale country were situated 100 instead of nearly 300 miles from town it would draw the crowd as do the best of the Shire packs; but its remoteness is its safeguard, and most certainly its "fields" are quite large enough, though, thanks to the fact that Mr. Straker is a disciplinarian, there is very little over-riding of hounds. And without doubt the Tynedale hunt has a reputation which extends all through the hunting world. It is, in point of fact, generally known that the country is one of the best in the kingdom, that the blood of the kennel is most valuable, and that the sport shown reaches a very high standard indeed. *A propos* I may mention that nearly twenty years ago, when I was hunting with the Tynedale a good deal, and sending accounts of their doings to the *Field*, an ex-Master of one of the Shire packs—whom I met one day in London—put me through a regular cross-examination as to the Tynedale country and so forth, and seemed (I thought) inclined to think that I had over-egged the pudding in my description of the hunting, and more especially of the country. Once or twice afterwards this same gentleman renewed the subject, but I had almost forgotten the matter until a Reigate show of a few years ago, when my friend told me that, though he had not seen the Tynedale in the field, he had shortly before motored all through the country when on his way to Scotland, and had been greatly impressed. He told me that he had had no time to spare for a look at the hounds in kennel, but that he had crossed the country slowly from Bywell Bridge to Belsay, and then travelled up the North Road, along the Tynedale-Morpeth boundary, and he had come to



the conclusion that there was no finer hunting country either in England or Ireland.

Before going into details of the country I must, however, refer to something I have already written. I referred to an extract in *Baily's Hunting Directory* which mentioned Mr. Robertson, of Lees, and the Northumberland and North Durham Hounds, the inference being that this pack were the predecessors of the Tynedale. I explained that I was unable to understand the reference, and gave my opinion to that effect. Since then I have had a letter from a hunting man of high standing who resides in the Tynedale country, and who writes me: "I never examined *Baily's* account of Tynedale before, and agree with you that it is a mistake or a blunder. I don't think Mr. Robertson, of Lees, ever hunted the present Tynedale country." My correspondent has looked up the *Local Records*—a well-known Northumberland classic—and has sent me one or two extracts which entirely go to prove that Mr. Robertson hunted in North Northumberland only, and that what is now the Tynedale country was hunted or managed by a committee for a short time, after which Mr. Nicholas Maughan became the first Master.

The extracts are as follow:—

"March, 1837.—During this month an arrangement was made by which Sir Matthew White Ridley, Bart., relinquished the hunting of South Northumberland and entrusted the future management of his hounds to a committee consisting of Sir Edward Blackett, Edward Riddell, and M. Clayton, Esqrs.

"April, 1838.—During the spring of this year R. J. Lambton, Esq., gave up the maintenance of his celebrated pack of foxhounds, which was sold for £3,000. A meeting of the gentlemen of the county of Durham was held about the latter end of the month at Durham, when measures were taken for raising funds for continuing the hunt and for obtaining such a pack of hounds as would not discredit their predecessor.

"May, 1839.—During this month Mr. Robertson, of Lees, purchased for 1,000 guineas the hounds which Lord Suffield had bought of Mr. R. Lambton. The pack was afterwards

called the Northumberland and North Durham Hounds, and it began the season on Wednesday, Oct. 30, with a famous run from Etal to Paxton, in Berwickshire.

"1843, Feb. 10.—A dinner was given in the Assembly Rooms, Newcastle, to Sir M. W. Ridley, Bart., by the members of the Northumberland Hunt as a mark of their estimation of his conduct as Master of the hounds.

"1843, July 15.—About this time the Northumberland and North Durham Foxhounds (formerly part of the Lambton pack), which had hunted the northern portion of Northumberland for some years, were sold to Lord Elcho by their owner, D. Robertson, Esq., who relinquished the mastership.

"1844, May 27.—Wm. Russell, Esq., of Brancepeth, having relinquished the keeping of foxhounds, a meeting of noblemen and gentlemen was held in Durham, at which Viscount Seaham, Mr. Russell, and Colonel Tower were appointed a committee of management, and it was determined to found a new establishment, to be called the Durham County Foxhounds.

"1845, May 19.—Sir M. W. Ridley, Bart., having intimated his intention of giving up his hunting establishment, a meeting of sportsmen was held in Newcastle, when it was determined to keep up the hunt by subscription.

"July 30.—Sir M. W. Ridley's hounds were sold by auction in London for £773."

From the above one gathers that the committee mentioned in the first extract held office from 1837 until Mr. Maughan was appointed Master in 1845, and I am inclined to think that during the period referred to the country was still known as Sir Matthew White Ridley's. It is plain, too (I think), that the committee for a time looked after all the country which is now included in the Tynedale and Morpeth hunts, and it is probable that in 1839 Mr. Robertson began to hunt Northern Northumberland only, and not the southern portion of the county. Also it is the case that in 1844 Mr. Watson, of North Seaton, and Mr. Vaughan were joint Masters of a pack which hunted the western portion of what has since been known as the Morpeth country, while Lord Elcho took over the north side of Mr. Robertson's hunt. This arrangement was made one year before Mr. Maughan became Master of

the Tynedale, and it shows the division of Sir M. W. Ridley's original country into two smaller ones—an arrangement which was probably called for by the fact that hunting men generally were then crying out for a greater number of days in each area of the hunt. Sir M. W. Ridley's original country must have been very large, including the Tynedale (north of the Tyne), the Morpeth, and probably parts of the Percy, and possibly of the Coquetdale, and it is plain enough that few parts of this huge district could have received all the attention they required. I notice, by the way, that the reference to Mr. Robertson, of Lees, and the Northumberland and North Durham hunt has been eliminated from the later editions of *Baily*, and I have no doubt Mr. Straker will agree that the pack just mentioned never came near the Tynedale country. I may add that in a former letter from the same valued correspondent I have been quoting that gentleman pointed out that parts of County Durham were not many years ago located on Tweedside, and it may be that on this account a pack which hunted the northern part of the former county were known as the Northumberland and North Durham.

From time to time maps of the hunting countries of England have been published, and one of these was brought out in the early 'fifties, which showed the Tynedale country as extending over all the western portion of the Braes of Derwent hunt, and all the eastern part of the Haydon country. I am writing away from home, and therefore perhaps readers will excuse further reference to what I have written before. I have, however, found a more recent map called "A Hunt Map of England and Wales," and this was published in 1880. It gives the Tynedale no country whatever south of the Tyne, and it extends the Braes of Derwent country to the line of the Devils Water, and thence to the head of the Derwent River near Riddlehamhope. As a matter of fact both maps are wrong as regards the Tynedale, for though that pack, as far as I know, never drew coverts in the western part of the Derwent Valley, they, as successors to the Slaley, most certainly included in their country a great deal of what is now Braes of Derwent country, and also a big slice of the Haydon country. There are, however, working agreements between the Tynedale and its neighbours, by virtue of which the Braes

of Derwent have all the country east of the Healey Burn, and the Haydon all the south side of the Tyne west of the Healey Burn during five-sixths of the season. The Tynedale since Mr. Priestman became Master of the Braes of Derwent have never drawn east of Healey; but they come to Newbiggen, Dipton, and other places in Haydon domains in the late spring, and I have seen them draw from West Dipton to within a mile or two of Haydon Bridge some few years ago. And *à propos* the Tynedale and Haydon connection, I have received the following interesting letter from Mr. John Robson, of Newton, Bellingham:

“ Newton, Bellingham, Dec. 7, 1915.

“ DEAR SHOTLEY,—I have been very much interested in your accounts of the Tynedale and Braes of Derwent hunts, especially the former.

“ My father, who was an old man when he died over thirty years ago, said that a Hexham solicitor called Stokoe kept hounds at Slaley which were the origin of the Tynedale.

“ I see in Saturday's *Field* you say that Mr. John (no doubt this should be Nicholas, not John) Maughan did so. Probably he followed Mr. Stokoe. This will account for the Tynedale claiming that part of their country south of the Tyne.

“ Of course, they also own that portion called by Surtees ‘ Allgood's Corduroys,’ but that can be accounted for by Mr. Hunter Allgood's having the hounds, and their kennels being at Nunwick. Do you remember the Braes of Derwent hunting Hesleyside, or was it before your day? I succeeded them, and they left the finest stock of old foxes I ever saw.

“ The ‘ Old Squire,’ as he was called at Bellingham, was the best preserver imaginable, and the Border was not a big pack. I have seen as many foxes as hounds in the Hesleyside coverts, so much so that I have hunted them three days in succession, and found plenty on the third day.—I am, yours truly,  
JOHN ROBSON.”

The above letter goes a long way towards proving what I have before suggested, viz., that when Mr. Maughan was hunting the present Haydon country there was no other fox-

hound pack in the country, the hounds of which Mr. Lambert, of Elrington, was Master between 1845 and 1850 being harriers. This opinion was held by the late Mr. Joseph Lee, of Land Ends, who was emphatic on the point that, though a fox was occasionally hunted, the original Haydon hunt was a harrier pack until Mr. Maughan came on the scene, and whipped off hare to run fox. At this date one would think this and similar questions to be of no great moment, but, as a matter of fact, I find there are many old, and some quite young, sportsmen who like to know exact particulars of the hunting arrangements of a bygone generation. And *à propos* the Braes of Derwent hunting the Hesleyside country (now in the Border Hunt), I may say—as is said in another place—the answer is in the affirmative. Indeed, I am sorry that I omitted what was a somewhat important proceeding, but I had it in mind to ask Mr. John Cowen if he could give me some particulars as to his father's (Colonel Cowen's) visits to the Border country, and I have forgotten to do so. Neither have I any references which I can consult on the matter; but writing from memory I think Colonel Cowen used to take his pack to the neighbourhood of Bellingham, for a week or more at a time, during several seasons, and perhaps three or four times in each season. I also think the period would be in the late 'seventies and early 'eighties, or perhaps even a little later. Anyhow, I went there twice and saw Colonel Cowen's pack at work in the moorland country. One meet I went to was at Cairnglassenhope Plantation, and it snowed and rained all day. I had stayed at Bellingham overnight, and my chief recollection of the day is that a high wind spoilt the sport, but that hounds were busy all day. The other day I had in that country involved a start by a very early train from Newcastle. I was with the late Mr. J. T. Ramsey, who had arranged for a couple of horses to meet us at Bellingham station; they were not there when we arrived, and, to cut a long story short, we had a long hunt for the horses, a long ride before we found hounds, and we, personally, saw no sport, though hounds had been running for hours when we did find them. I imagine the meets were fixed for an early hour, and, anyhow, it was not a good plan to travel from Newcastle to Bellingham on a hunting morning, though I rather fancy



Mr. Ramsey used to do it frequently, and I know that he was in the habit of following the Border on foot when he was nearer eighty than seventy years of age. I have also a much earlier recollection of Bellingham than that, for I was at the agricultural show held there in September, 1873, and rode in the hunter jumping class, and from that day to this I have never seen a better trial ground. The class was for hunters of any age, and, I think, no condition as to weight; but after the horses had been inspected by the judges they were sent over a short, perfectly natural course of half a dozen fences, and their fencing was taken into consideration before the prizes were awarded. My mount was a very good hunter, owned by the late Mr. Percy Taylor—a son of the late Mr. Hugh Taylor, of Chipchase Castle—who at that time was living at the Bay Horse Inn at Stamfordham, and possessed as fine a lot of hunters as were then to be found in the north of England.

Indeed, these horses were sold at auction for very high prices a year or two later, and one of them—a horse named Simon, which Mr. Taylor had bought from the Spraggon of Nafferton—was bought by the late Sir William Eden for 300gs., and some years afterwards Sir William, when Master of the South Durham, told me Simon was the best hunter he had ever owned. I do not remember that Simon was at the Bellingham show in question, but Mr. Taylor had at least three in the entry, and entertained a party at the Bellingham Hotel, of which the late James Hedley, the coursing judge, was landlord. During the evening which preceded the show there was a good deal of jubilation, the proceedings culminating in a bet being made by James Hedley that he would ride a horse he had in his stable over the gate between the stable yard and a stack yard behind his premises then and there. The horse was duly brought out, lighted lanterns were suspended at either end of the gate, and Mr. Hedley mounted, and the horse popped over as easily as if he was jumping a sheep hurdle. But in dismounting the rider, who was a big, burly man, slipped up as he touched the curbstone, with the result that he sprained his ankle so badly that he had to attend the show on the following day in a pony cart, and came in for a

great deal of chaff. In the hunter competition the first fence out of the show field was a high thorn fence, the weaker parts of which had been strengthened with timber, and immediately beyond was a cart track some 14ft. or more wide. This cart track had been newly covered with ashes or soft coal and was very black, and my horse, a most impetuous goer, flew it in each of the two rounds he did, and this probably prevented him from taking the prize. Other fences were a bank and a stone wall, and there was one artificial jump in front of the stands. My horse never touched a twig, but the judges preferred an up-and-down cantering cob, who popped over each obstacle with not an inch to spare, and who jumped on to the black road instead of over it. But the point I wish to emphasise is that in this class for hunters, in which all the horses had to jump, real hunters were shown, and not the animals which at that day went the round of the shows for the jumping prizes alone. The same sort of thing has been done in South Wales and one or two other places, and in recent Olympia shows there have been classes in which hunters had to jump; but as a rule all hunters' prizes at all the principal shows are given for horses which have not to jump when shown, and whose jumping ability has, in fact, to be taken on trust. The subject is too big to be tackled just now, and would hardly be in place in this volume; but it is perhaps worth pointing out that at local country shows the Bellingham plan of forty-nine years ago might well be adopted.

Mr. Nicholas Maughan gave up the Tynedale country in 1854, and was succeeded by Major Robert Bell, who held office until 1867. Then came Mr. Hunter Allgood, of Nunwick, for a couple of seasons, and he was followed for two seasons by the joint mastership of Mr. George Fenwick and Mr. Edward Riddell. In 1871 Mr. Fenwick went on single-handed, and remained in office until 1883, when the present Master, Mr. J. C. Straker, succeeded him. This is the history of the hunt, as regards its Masters, of the last sixty years, and from what I have seen and from what I have heard, I am inclined to think that no hunt in the country has carried on its operations in a smoother or more satisfactory manner, or maintained a higher average of sport. During all this period

the kennels have been at Stagshaw Bank, except when hounds were at Nunwick from 1867 to 1869. Of this I have some sort of recollection, but I am not certain on the point. I do remember, however, that Mr. Hunter Allgood had a very big establishment, both of horses and hounds, and that, in fact, he did the thing remarkably well. In my childhood I used to hear a good deal about the Tynedale doings, and my earliest recollection of the pack is that I fell off the back seat of a dogcart on the way to a Tynedale meet, but was not hurt. As a boy on a pony I saw the pack occasionally, more particularly when the Durham County were hunting in their Sedgfield country, and the Tynedale were within riding distance of Shotley Bridge, and on one of these occasions I had one of the great hunts of my life. It must be understood that I was well mounted, having a nearly thoroughbred pony of 14 hands, good enough to go anywhere. Where hounds met I do not remember, but they found at Ingoe, and had a hunt which, according to my recollection, lasted all day, and killed at Meldon Dyke Nook in the Morpeth country. An account of this hunt was referred to in the *Field* of Jan. 21, 1905, when old runs were being discussed, and I afterwards had a letter from the late Mr. George Anthony Fenwick, stating that he remembered it well, and telling me of another very similar run of an earlier date, to which I will refer later.

I was well over twenty-five miles from home, but I had the company of the late Mr. Ben Spraggon as far as Nafferton, and I stopped at his house for tea, and got home between ten and eleven o'clock, not one whit the worse for the many long hours in the saddle. Nor was the pony sick or sorry after his long day, and he was certainly out with hounds again four or five days later. I may now give some general idea of the Tynedale country, and yet I cannot do this as thoroughly as I should like, for the simple reason that the greater part of my hunting in the country in question has been on the southern and eastern sides of the hunt, and that I have seldom been in the North Tyne Valley with the pack, and not very often on the north-western border of the hunt. The fact is that the districts I have just referred to are a very long distance from Shotley Bridge, where my quarters have nearly always been located, and even in these days of motor-cars

there is still the difficulty about getting horses to a distant meet in a country where there are no trains, and practically no inns with good accommodation for nags. The Tynedale country lies west of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and north of the river Tyne, which to all intents and purposes form its southern boundary. On the west it extends up the North Tyne valley for many miles, and on the east the high road from Newcastle to Belsay separates it from the Morpeth country, while on the north the boundary varies a little, the Morpeth being on the north-east and the Border on the north-west of Tynedale territory. West of Belsay the line between the Tynedale and Morpeth is a little irregular, but clear enough to those who live and hunt in the country; but all this particular district of either hunt is grand galloping ground and as sound as a bell; whereas on the extreme north-west of the country, and at no great distance from the moors, some of the land is not so well drained, and is in places inclined to be boggy. Hounds hunt on Mondays in the west of the country, the meets ranging between the kennels and such places as Kirkharle, Kirkwhelpington, and Capheaton. But there are also several meets in between, such as Whittington, Hallington, Bingfield, Bavington, and so forth. Matfen and Matfen Piers are also Monday meets, and to explain the situation all these fixtures are in the western half of the country, but on the plateau of high-lying grass land, while the Wednesday meets are for the Tyne Valley, and the Friday meets for the eastern section of the country, all the way from the Tyne to Belsay. The Wednesday meets, though nearly always in the Valley, are in two distinct districts, one set including fixtures in the lower Tyne Valley between Corbridge and Whittle Dene, and the other the fixtures in the North Tyne Valley, from St. Oswalds to Chollerford, Chipchase, Nunwick, Gunnerton, and as far as Countess Park, which is so far away as to be what Surtees would call "extra parochial." Since the war hounds have not been out so regularly on Wednesdays as they formerly were. I have to thank several correspondents for sending me accounts of good hunts with the Tynedale in the long ago, and these I will mention in due course; but first I may say that I am not presuming to pose as an historian of the Tynedale Hunt, for there have

been many great hunts in the country of which I have no knowledge. As my readers will understand, this book is for the most part a personal recollection, but I have such a liking for the Tynedale, and have such pleasant recollections of the sport I have seen within its boundaries, that I feel constrained to give, to the best of my ability, some description of the country, if only for the benefit of those hunting people who have heard of, but do not know, the locality. And I also bear in mind that, so far as I know, very little has ever been written about the Tynedale hunt or its country.

It is a moot point whether the Monday or the Friday country of the Tynedale is the best. Both are very good indeed, and if foxes go the right way I am inclined to think that the best riding lines are in the centre of the country, and rather on the eastern side of the centre, but as a matter of fact foxes from every part of the country often reach its centre, and at times it happens—not by any means infrequently—that foxes found quite near the riverside will leave the valley and travel over the very best of lines. Where the eastern side of the country has a pull—purely from a riding point of view—is that the country is flatter and less undulating than it is in the north. Even so it is a high-lying plain or plateau, but as one goes west the country becomes more undulating, is higher above sea level, and occasionally steep places are to be found, as for example the north side of Grindstone Law, and the rise from the valley beyond to Great Ryall and the Moot Law. Dealing with the Monday hunting first, Aydon Dene is generally drawn after hounds have met at Stagshaw House or the kennels and this dene, though it does not reach the river Tyne, dips down the country to within a mile of it, and is, to the best of my knowledge, the only low-lying cover in the Monday country. There is also a good covert at Aydon White House, but this is well up above the dene, and on the edge of the plateau. Coles or Cows Whin, not far away, was a famous covert when I first knew the Tynedale, but the whin has now disappeared, for it was also a fir plantation, and the fir trees have grown up. There is also a whin covert on Stagshaw Common, which is not a hundred yards distant from the kennels. This whin is



not inclosed, and is what in Ireland would be called a "wild gorse," but it is an extraordinarily good covert, and during a period of several seasons when I saw a good deal of the Tyndale, I do not remember that I ever saw it drawn blank. Moreover, I remember one very good hunt from it, when hounds ran north to Great Ryall, over the Moot Law, and to Fairshaw, the fox, if I recollect rightly, going to ground in the earth, which, being a long way outside the draw arranged for the day, was unstopped. The point of this run must have been something like eight miles. Taking a line due north from the kennels means following the Watling Street, which hereabouts runs almost straight from south to north or *vice versâ*. Perhaps the greater part of the Monday country is east of this road, and notably the district which is near the kennels. There are good coverts round Sandhoe and Beaufront, for example, which seem to belong to the Wednesday country, but there is a whin covert just over the northern boundary of the common, and west of the Watling Street, which is often drawn from a kennel meet, and the name of which I have for the moment forgotten. Butlers Whin on the military road, and a mile further north, is a rattling good covert, but my experience is that it is usually reserved for Wednesday meets at Beaufront or St. Oswalds. East of the kennels and south of the military road—which extends from Newcastle-on-Tyne to Chollerford on the North Tyne and beyond—there are good coverts at Shildon Bog and Shildon Hill, the last-named indeed being one of the best coverts in the hunt, and, I think, on the Matfen Estate. The usual meet for these coverts is Matfen Piers, a farmhouse on the military road, four miles north-east of Corbridge and two miles south of the village of Matfen. These coverts may be drawn also from meets at Newton Village or Newton Hall, but one associates them chiefly with the Matfen coverts. Shildon Bog is a considerable extent of swampy ground which lies west of Shildon Hill. There are dry places on it much favoured by foxes, and it is a pretty draw, for nearly every fox which leaves when hounds draw it must do so in full view of the field. Shildon Hill is a fir plantation with a gorse cover inside, and from it foxes go to all parts of the country. Another covert a mile or two west of Shildon Hill, and also

south of the military road, is Carr Hill, and hereabouts is a wonderful artificial earth which was made by Mr. Barnett of Halton Castle, the secretary of the hunt. Anyhow, this earth has been most successful during a long period of years, and from some whins near it hounds ran a seven-mile point to Horsley Whin on their opening day some twelve or fourteen years ago quite late in the afternoon. The coverts I have mentioned are the principal ones in the (strictly) Monday country which lie to the south of the military road, but there are several small places as well, which only take a few minutes to draw, and each of which at times afford a hunt, notably a little plantation alongside the road at Matfen Piers.

North of the military road, and some two or three miles from the kennels, is the village of Whittington, perhaps as popular a fixture as any in the hunt. It is an old stone-built hamlet, consisting of a couple of farmhouses and two or three dozen cottages, and is not on a main road. There are, however, several lanes which reach it from various points, and it is the chief road from the railway at Corbridge to such even smaller hamlets as Great Ryall and Ingoe. Whittington is situated amidst a sea of grass, there being fairly flat country to the east of the village, and undulating ground to the north and west. And two of the very best gorse—or whin as they are called locally—coverts in the hunt are near it. And here I may mention that these whin coverts are a great feature of the Tyndale country. There are many of them, mostly situated in the open field, but carefully fenced and well looked after, with wicket gates to allow of ingress and egress to the huntsman. In many of them there is a notice board fixed on to a pole, the notice having "This covert is the property of the Tyndale Hunt Club," or words to that effect. Some are rented by members of the hunt, and at times are called by the names of those who pay for them, this being an old fashion in the north, as is shown in "Plain or Ringlets" when Mr. Pringle is victimised at the hunt dinner of Sir Moses Mainchance's hounds by being made a member of the hunt and sponsor of a covert. But Kirsopp's Whin, one of the two fine gorses near Whittington, takes its name from its owner, Mr. James Kirsopp of the Spital, near Hexham, a prominent member of the Tyndale hunt, who has been following

the pack for something like forty years, and is still as keen a fox preserver as when he began. Kirsopp's Whin is a beautiful covert and a certain find, and no matter which way hounds go they are certain of sport, unless indeed scent is altogether absent. The covert is on the east side of the Whittington to Ryall lane, and only a field from it, while the other good covert just referred to is half a mile west of the same lane, and is known as Grindstone Law. It is younger and perhaps a trifle larger than Kirsopp's Whin, and it is practically impossible to draw them both blank. It may be mentioned that before the Grindstone Law covert came into being there was a covert called Dun's Moor almost immediately east of it, and before that a whin named Todridge, which was situated rather less than a mile south of Grindstone Law. Both of these played a big part in providing sport for the Tynedale in their day, but Grindstone Law is as good as its predecessors, its only drawback being that if foxes go from it due north there is a steep bit of up and down, and an awkward bottom to cross, and this comes into the line very frequently. About two miles west of Grindstone Law, and close to the Watling Street, is another gorse covert on the side of a hill, called Bewclay or Bewclay Craggs, and this is also a Monday covert. Going back to Whittington, right of the village, and rather to the south, is a small covert on Clarewood Farm which generally holds a fox, and east of this place all the coverts round Matfen Hall (Sir Hugh Blackett's), which are numerous and good. The best as far as I can judge, are the Mile covert, a plantation midway between Matfen Village and Matfen Piers, and the Marl Pits, a mile east of Matfen, on the lane which leads to Stamfordham. Other coverts hereabouts are the Dog Kennel Wood, the Sparrow Letch Plantation, and Angus's Whin, which is north-east of Matfen, and less than a mile north of the military road. This is (or was) a certain find, and the starting point of many good hunts, as also is the Marl Pits, from which good covert there was a fine hunt in January of 1913. This hunt came late in the day after a busy morning, but there was a great fox before hounds and first-rate scent. They ran by Fenwick, Cowstand, and Black Heddon to Bygate, through the covert and on to Belsay, and swinging round came into Bygate again. They left the covert very quickly, and ran fast to Capheaton,

through the park, and on by Clock Mill almost to Kirkharle. Still going north they crossed the Morpeth boundary, but gradually turning right-handed came back into the Tynedale country and put their fox to ground at Shaftoe Craggs. I made the point eight miles, and the full length of the run between seventeen and eighteen miles, while the time was one hour and three-quarters. The local paper had an account of the hunt which gave the full distance as twenty-three miles, but this was obviously wrong, it being impossible for a run of that distance to take less than some period over two hours. Ten miles an hour is a great pace for a hunt of any length, and in this particular hunt it will be seen the pace was even a little faster, and was maintained for an hour and three-quarters. And *à propos* this hunt I may mention that I came from Shotley with the Master of the Braes of Derwent, and with us was a youngster who had just got a commission in the Special Reserve, and who had never been in the Tynedale country before. He got almost to the end of the hunt, which is perhaps not very wonderful, but the night was one of the blackest I can remember, and he found his way from some point between Capheaton and Kirkharle to the Stelling—where our motor-car had been left—and had been there for half an hour when I arrived. It would be almost dark when he left Capheaton, and he had no one with him, and those who know the country will understand how easily one can go wrong, in extreme darkness such as there was that night, between Capheaton and Ingoe. This youngster was one of the only two officers of his regiment who survived the retreat from Mons, but he was killed in the spring of 1917.

Without doubt the Matfen coverts are a great stand-by for the west centre of the Tynedale country, and east of them is the Stamfordham district, which will be referred to when the Friday country is discussed. Going north from Whittington the next good covert is Fairspring, which lies to the west of the Moot Law, and beyond and quite close is the village of Hallington, where hounds often meet. The Moot Law is a grass farm of 1100 acres, with, according to my recollection, not a tree on it, though there may be an odd stunted fir or two on the southern boundary. There is a cart road across the farm to Kirkheaton, but it is a wild and bleak spot, rising

to a height of about 1000ft. in its highest part, and has no regular covert on it, though there is a good deal of scattered gorse. Still, hounds frequently cross it, and when this happens the field are hard put to it, for the walls—it is entirely fenced with loose, stone walls—are 5ft. high in places, and have a sheep rail or wire stretched along the top, some 8in. above the stones, and placed there to prevent the sheep from scrambling over the walls. Many years ago I came on to the Moot Law from the Kirkheaton side one very dark night, thinking to cut off a corner on my way to Corbridge, but I quickly found myself in a dense fog, and lost the road, the result being that I wandered round for an hour or two, and did not reach Corbridge until nine o'clock. Hounds had had a good hunt in the Capheaton district, and I had lost a shoe, and whilst it was being put on two who were going in the same direction had got too far ahead for me to catch them up. I have other recollections of the Moot Law, for in the late 'seventies and early 'eighties there used to be one or two private coursing meetings there every winter, and a party of us used to leave Shotley at 6 a.m. and drive twenty miles to the fixture with a four-in-hand team. Breakfast at the farm or at Great Ryall, as the case might be, was the next item, and then we coursed until dark, and many of the best Northumberland greyhounds of the day used to be among the runners. The tenant of the farm was a courser, and he saw to it that a plentiful supply of greyhounds were forthcoming. No questions were asked as to what the greyhounds really were; all ran in their kennel names, and eight-dog stakes of 5s., 10s., or £1 were made up on the spot, the object of many of the men who brought greyhounds being to obtain a good trial. Thus it happened that those which were obviously the best performers were often drawn after one course; but, on the other hand, if the stakes were run out quickly there were always men who wished to run matches, and I have seen eight or ten of these after the regular programme had been worked off. The farm in those days carried a fine head of hares; but they were for the most part singularly strong and some of the greyhounds got a terrible gruelling. Others, again, were saved by the fact that there were smeuses in the walls which the hares knew and went for,



while the greyhounds had to jump. Once through the smeuse the hare would frequently turn sharp along the wall and the greyhounds would be unsighted and easily picked up. There used to be a dinner at Great Ryall after the sport was over—which dinner we had brought with us in the morning—and at this several of the neighbouring farmers and the schoolmaster from Ingoe were always among the guests; but the professional coursers had departed for the railway at Corbridge. The schoolmaster, whose name was Ord, was an original, a local poet, and about as sharp a hand at repartee as I ever met. He would make an impromptu verse about any of the company, and one of his efforts I have never forgotten. One of our party was named “Willie,” and “Ord, who always very quickly made himself at home on these occasions, soon started chipping Willie, and continued it through the dinner. From the centre of the room hung an old candelabra, into which half a dozen candles were stuck. When dinner was over Willie produced a cigar, and, standing up, tried to reach one of the candles in order to get a light. He made two or three shots at the candle, and finally brought it down on the table, whilst Ord in his blandest tones kept repeating:

“Little Willie, Little Willie,

Make an effort, use some force;

Now you’ve got it, now you’ve missed it

(and as the candle was brought down),

Now you’ve lost the final course.”

In the northern part of the Tynedale Monday country, it may be mentioned that about every other week the Monday meets are held in the extreme north of the hunt, the most frequent fixtures being Capheaton, Kirkharle, and Kirkwhelpington, of which the last named is the furthest north. Kirkheaton, north of the Moot Law, and Bavington, a mile and a half north-west of Kirkheaton, do not seem to be much utilised as meets in these days; but there are coverts at either place, and as far as my experience goes these are most frequently drawn after hounds have met at Hallington. Of the country round Kirkharle and Kirkwhelpington I do not know enough to write with any confidence. I have been there odd times, and have recollection of a fine hunt from Merryshields many years ago; but this

particular corner of the Tynedale is well over twenty miles—some of it nearly thirty—from my quarters, and no railway available. Some years ago (and just before the coming of motor-cars) I was frequently in the middle portion of the Monday country, and as far north as Hallington and Kirkheaton; but even those meets involved sending horses to Corbridge overnight, and a drive of eleven miles, plus a hack of ten miles in the morning. If the day was a long one and horses were tired, they had to be left at Corbridge a second night, and, in fact, too much road work was involved. Meets at “The Kirks and the Caps,” as a Tynedale man on my side of the country used to call them, became out of the question, and here it may be mentioned that throughout the centre of the Tynedale country there are remarkably few inns where the accommodation for horses can be relied upon. There is an inn at Stamfordham, in the Friday country, which, in company with the Master of the Braes of Derwent, I used frequently for a season or two; but to this place also horses had to be sent overnight, and we had to drive sixteen miles in the morning to reach our horses, and much of the ground was very hilly, involving slow progress. All these things are altered in these days of motor-cars; but as regards the Tynedale country, and reaching the northern part of it from a point eight miles beyond its southern boundary, the question of horses is even worse than it was, for stables at many of the small country inns have been turned into garages, hostlers have become chauffeurs, and even where a stable remains there may be no forage. Indeed, it is now a difficult matter—at times—to procure a drink of meal and water for a tired horse at a village inn, and many times in recent years I have bought meal at a village shop, and mixed it with water procured at the same place. This, however, has occurred more often when indulging in a summer driving tour than after hunting, for in the latter case, if meal is necessary, it can almost always be procured at the house of some hunting man, where one calls on the homeward road.

As regards Capheaton, I have more frequently seen hounds run there—generally from the Belsay coverts—than I have been present when the coverts have been drawn. Capheaton is placed in a grand grass country, and foxes found there must

almost of a certainty go away over the open; but I hardly know their favourite lines—except to Bygate and Belsay. I have, however, a short account of a great hunt from the Capheaton coverts which took place on March 10th, 1880, and particulars of which have been recently sent me by a friend, from whose hunting diary the following is an extract: “Met at Bavington. Found west side of Capheaton, ran by Wallington, Little Harle, Sweethope, and Ridsdale, over the Forest, and killed at Hareshaw Head. Time, two hours and thirty-five minutes. Distance run about twenty miles. Most of the field stopped at the Reed. Those who finished were N. Cornish, huntsman, and the whips, Messrs. Kirsopp, Guy Allgood, and J. Greene, and Mr. John Robson, of Newton, Bellingham, who joined the hunt on the way.”

This must have been a great hunt, and fairly straight, considering the amount of country covered, though hounds went north at first (to Wallington) and then north-west. And *à propos* of great hunts in the Tynedale country, a tremendous affair took place during the mastership of Mr. Hunter Allgood, on February 21st, 1868, after hounds had met at Colwell, a village just east of the Watling Street, and some nine or ten miles north of Corbridge. This run, which caused a great deal of talk at the time, and for many years afterwards, was not altogether satisfactory, for hounds soon left the good country, and reached a rough moorland district, where the riding was very bad, and most of the field, as I have always heard, were early tailed off, but whether owing to the pace or the difficult and quite unaccustomed riding line I am not quite certain. In 1883, however, fifteen years after the great run, a poem with the title, “A Run with the Tynedale Hounds, by a Fox,” was published by Blackwood and Sons, and as the author of this poem had drawn upon the great run for his theme a certain amount of controversy was aroused, which resulted in the following letter being written by the huntsman of the pack:—

“Tynedale Kennels, November 6th, 1883.

“Hon’d Sir,—The great run was on Friday, the 21st of February, 1868. The meet was at Colwell; found at Pity Me; ran first to the Dungeon, back to Ladywood over Gunbertown Fell, straight to the Tone Inn, then to Wanneys,

on to Black Hall, then to Harwood and Rothley Craggs, where we supposed changed foxes. My horse had had enough. Colonel Cust, seeing this, lent me his horse, saying I would kill my fox in five minutes. They then ran straight for Simon-side. Mr. Ridley, of the Grange, and Tom Martin were the only ones with me. We struggled over the moors until we reached Simonside, but not a hound could we see. Mr. Ridley said to me, 'Blow your horn, you will be sure to get them; he will go to ground in the rocks.' I did blow, but got no hounds. Colonel Cust's horse was so beat that I thought he would have died. With great difficulty got him to a farmhouse, where we got everything required. The horse soon rallied, and got home safe, but without hounds. Colonel Cust walked nearly all the way to Stagshaw with my horse—not a bad walk in top boots. The hounds ran on over the Coquet to a millstream near Biddlestone, where they killed their fox, or rather drowned him, at dark. Mr. Turnbull, of Great Tosson, collected a lot of the hounds during the night, and took care of them until the whip came looking for them the next morning.—I am, your obedient servant,

N. CORNISH."

From the above account it is evident that after hounds left Rothley Craggs it was nothing but a stern chase for the three who were with them, whereas in the run of March, 1880, huntsman, whippers-in, and some of the field were there to the end. Hounds going clean away from their field because of difficulties of terrain are not infrequent, and some fifteen years ago the Cumberland pack crossed the Eden in flood, and were not found again until the next day. As well as I recollect, they had made a seven-mile point to the river, but they went straight on after crossing, and were found on the following day many miles beyond, there being evidence to the effect that they had covered a great distance of ground. In the famous run of the Durham County pack in the 'forties of last century the latter part of the hunt was lost to the field because of fox and hounds crossing the Tees—also in flood—while the riders had to go to a bridge some miles away. In this latter case hounds made a seven-mile point to the river, and a twelve-mile point to the Bedale boundary after crossing the river; but this point is not quite

so long as that of the Tynedale from Pity Me to Biddlestone, which is in the present Coquetdale country, many miles north-west of Rothbury, and just over twenty miles from the place of finding. The run from Capheaton to Hareshaw Head shows a point of almost thirteen miles, but worked out on the map, by the few names of places which are given, it shows that hounds went well over the twenty miles. A twenty-mile point is a thing which a man who hunts all his life may never fall in for, and then if hounds do happen to make one it is good odds against any particular individual lasting to the end. Personally, in a fairly long experience, I have never seen a longer point than fourteen miles with foxhounds, and one of about seventeen, on two occasions, with staghounds.

The long point with foxhounds was with the Ledbury, who ran from Bosbury, close by their kennels of that day, to the banks of the Wye near Holme Lacy, most of the hunt taking place in the South Hereford country. That was during the mastership of the late Mr. Charles Morrell, and hounds were running between four and five hours, and probably changed more than once. Of points of from seven to ten miles I have ridden scores, but I imagine the ten miles is not very often exceeded, and if one looks carefully through the returns of sport which are sent to the *Field* at the end of the season it will be found that from all over the country—including Scotland and Ireland—there are rarely more than half a dozen runs mentioned which had a point of ten miles and upwards, and sometimes not so many. Where foxes are numerous long points are less frequent than where the supply is limited, and in many hunts season after season is got through without a point of more than half a dozen miles, and yet the sport may be remarkably good. There is something fascinating about a long point, more especially, perhaps, when a neighbouring country is invaded; but a long point does not invariably mean a really good hunt. For example, I remember a hunt in which a ten-mile point was made, in a thinly populated country, and where the fox had four distinct spells of road running, and in this case it meant that just about half the distance was done on the road. It is true that the roads of that particular hunt were for the most part sandy lanes, and not main roads; but the thing became very



monotonous, and somewhat comic, for more than once the fox was viewed nearly half a mile ahead. The hunt in question was with the North Durham, and it began close to Burn Hill with a fox which jumped up in the heather. He was quickly into the Stuartfield Lodge plantation, but when he reached the lane at Eliza he stuck to it to the Five Lane Ends, ran inside the wall of Woodlands Park for half a mile, and then took to the lane again, almost to Browney Bank. Then we had a bit of cross country to Bells House, but the fox ran the road again from the Monkey's Nest for quite a mile, and did the same thing in the lane alongside Weather Hill Covert. He was caught in the Shrubbery at Brancepeth, and as he had lost half his brush there was an opinion that he stuck to the roads because he had no steerage worth the name.

The Tynedale Wednesday is as a rule in the valley of the Tyne proper, between Horsley and Corbridge, or in the North Tyne; but in either case the good country is so near that hounds very often reach it. Horsley Wood, now the most easterly of the riverside coverts—for Wallbottle Dene has too much population round it—is a very fine covert, but it is more frequently drawn—in my experience—on a Friday. It is a certain find, and at times foxes rather hang to it; but if they once reach the higher ground near Horsley village they may go anywhere, and anyhow they are in the best riding country in the hunt. West of Horsley Wood is Whittle Dene, and two miles further west the Bywell coverts, owned by Lord Allendale. Whittle Dene is a long, winding, and rather narrow gill, which has wonderful lying at the north end, and is a very foxy spot. Just north of it is a whin covert on Nafferton Farm, but many of the Whittle Dene foxes go straight to Bywell and *vice versâ*. There are two particularly good coverts at Bywell, one on either side of the road which goes north from the bridge over the Tyne, and these always hold foxes. North of them are some small coverts round Newton Hall, which come into a Bywell draw, while further west is Styford, where there is a long plantation parallel with the river, and the Square Wood a field or two north. From this Square Wood I saw two eight-mile points in one season not many years ago. One fox ran by Newton, Luker House, Angus's Whin, Matfen, and Great Ryall to the Moot Law,

where he got to ground; and the other by Aydon, Halton, Rose's Bower, and then left-handed to Errington Hill Head, where he turned and came to the Beaufront coverts. Errington Hill Head was his furthest point from the Styford Square Wood. Very occasionally, but not very often, a fox from the Styford coverts will cross the Tyne into the Braes of Derwent country, and there is a ford of sorts at Styford; but as a rule it is very deep in winter, and the custom is for the hunt servants to stop hounds and bring them back as soon as possible. If the river is in flood the bridge at Corbridge, more than a mile away, has to be requisitioned. For the country which has just been mentioned, Bywell, Styford, and Toll Bar are the usual meets.

To those who do not know the district it may be explained that a mile or two west of Hexham the North Tyne and South Tyne become united. The former stream has reached the junction from the north-west, and the South Tyne from almost due west. With the last-named branch of the river we are not concerned at the moment; but the lower part of the North Tyne on both banks, and a considerable part of the stream on the left bank further north, are in the Tynedale country, and the coverts in all this district form part of the Wednesday country of the pack. I have mentioned the Styford coverts, which are on the Tyne proper, and west of them lies the considerable village of Corbridge, the nearest coverts to which are those at Aydon Dene, and some small spinneys near Stagshow House. These, however, seem to belong to the Monday country, and, still dealing with the river-side, the Beaufront and Sandhoe coverts come next, these being immediately to the east of the junction of the North and South Tyne. The spinneys at Beaufront always hold foxes, as does a larger covert a mile beyond, which belongs to The Riding, and the local name of which I forget. The Beaufront coverts and the bigger plantation I have just mentioned lie on the slopes of a hill, and are midway between the river and the plateau of the best Tynedale country to which I have so often referred. Higher up the hill are strong coverts at Fawcett Hill, Fern Hill, Butler's Whin, and Stanley Wood, and these with the coverts at Beaufront and The Riding form the draw of certain Wednesdays, and are amongst them likely

to produce any amount of sport. The country round them is nearly all grass, with occasional rough fields where some heather grows, and if foxes are sometimes rather inclined to ring the changes between these particular coverts, the plantations are so far apart that any amount of fun can be had. Indeed, I recollect a Beaufront day, within the last ten years, when hounds were running almost continuously for over four hours without ever going over the military road to the north or over the Watling Street to the east. They were—I think—as far west as Fallowfield, but fox after fox ran a big ring within the limits I have described, and though no great point could be made in such an area, the day was one of the best of that season. But from Butler's Whin and Stanley Wood—which lie on the south side of the military road—foxes perhaps most frequently go north, and there they have before them the wide expanse of the Tynedale Monday country. A favourite meet for the most southern part of the North Tyne valley, and also for some of the coverts which have just been mentioned, is St. Oswalds, a tiny hamlet on the military road, about one mile east of the bridge over the North Tyne at Chollerford, and with several good coverts exceedingly handy. To the south are Fallowfield and Brunton Banks, while Fern Hill and Butler's Whin are barely a mile away, and slightly to the north and quite close to the place of meeting is Way Wood, a singularly foxy place, in spite of the fact that there are large and important stone quarries at its eastern end. From Way Wood numberless good runs have come, and I believe it was from this covert that hounds ran to the neighbourhood of Stamfordham in a high gale a few years ago. Hounds were going down wind all the way, and made a point of nine or ten miles, and a curious result of the hunt—it was said—was that on the following Sunday various farm labourers went to church at Matfen or Stamfordham wearing comparatively new and fashionable tall hats.

Of the coverts in the more northern part of the North Tyne valley I have not had enough experience to write with confidence, but if hounds are on the left bank of the river they are always quite close to the open Monday country, and may (and frequently do) go over the best of it. If I were resident in the Tynedale I should try to keep all the Wednesday

appointments, for several reasons, the chief of which is that hounds so frequently reach the best country in the hunt when they are not expected and when there is no one to head foxes, no motors or traps on the road, and, in fact, when the countryside is as quiet as it is on a non-hunting day. Then, too, though fields are large when hounds meet at Bywell or Howden Dene, they are much smaller in the North Tyne valley, which, as far as my experience goes, is a capital scenting country. Indeed, I have long since come to the conclusion that the western half of the Tynedale country can hardly be beaten as far as its scenting properties are concerned. Much of it is old pasture that is never mown, and frequently there is long grass in scores of inclosures all through the winter, while at times there are traces of heather. The land, indeed, is not so highly farmed as the country further east, and this is probably because so much of it is at a considerable height above sea level; anyhow, it is most delectable hunting ground, in which, by the way, a slow horse is of no more use on five days out of six than it would be in Leicestershire or Northants. The Tynedale are a remarkably fast pack, and there are almost no woodlands to pull them up and cause slower hunting. Of course scent varies, as it does elsewhere, and on the high plateau the wind sometimes interferes with sport; but if the conditions are anything like right there is always pace in a Tynedale hunt, and common-bred horses are very quickly half a mile behind. The best hunters that money can buy are, in fact, what are wanted for this country, and I have little hesitation in saying that the field is, on the whole, remarkably well mounted.

The Friday country used to attract the biggest fields of the week, and I imagine it still does so, and until a few years ago the fine open country used to begin within three miles of the centre of Newcastle-on-Tyne—on the north-west of the town. Indeed, if one left Newcastle by the old coaching road which runs by Ponteland and Belsay, and forms the boundary between the Tynedale and Morpeth countries, it took less than three miles to clear the town, and there were—little more than a dozen years ago—no suburbs on that side. Indeed, from the old kennels of the late Mr. Fred Lamb's harriers at the Cowgate there was the little hamlet of Kenton half a mile

away to the north, and beyond it a vast expanse of grand hunting country, which contained no industrialism and no population beyond the ordinary agricultural community, and all this could be seen at a glance from the hill on which the kennels stood.

No doubt the district was "ripe for building," as the land exploiters say, and no doubt also more dwelling areas were being demanded by the growing town close by. But from a hunting point of view matters were not improved, for by the building of a light railway—as it was at first; it is now an ordinary line—from Newcastle to Ponteland, eight miles north of the former place, building operations sprang up in several quarters, and a very nice piece of hunting country became, if not altogether spoilt, at all events sadly mutilated. When I was a boy the nearest coverts to Newcastle were a spinney or two near Whorlton, not more than four miles from the town. There was also Wallbottle Dene, a certain find when Mr. J. T. Ramsay lived at Wallbottle Hall and looked after the foxes; but I do not hear of the Dene being drawn in these days—though it may be—and I imagine there is too much population near it, for the industrialism now extends some miles west of Newcastle along the riverside, and there are one or two new collieries in the district. I saw hounds run to Wallbottle Dene not long before the war from Throckley Fell, and that was while the light railway was being laid, and the country was full of rumour as to the "live wire" system being adopted. There is, however, a comparatively new colliery called North Wallbottle, which is quite close to Jingling Gate, a favourite meet of Mr. Lamb's harriers, and there is a building estate between that place and the Cowgate, through which runs the Newcastle to Stamfordham road, and there are further building sites near the North road, not far from Ponteland, and also "village homes" and so forth. From what I have been told the coverts have not suffered much, but hunting people who have had experience of such matters know that suburbs of every sort alter the hunting of a district, and in my opinion they interfere even more with sport than a colliery does, the last-named being as a rule a self-contained affair, with colliery and colliery village covering a comparatively small piece of ground. There are practically no collieries



in the Tynedale country, for North Wallbottle is really almost extra-parochial, being on the extreme boundary, and shutting off no covers from the open parts of the hunt. Nor is the particular district in which it lies quite such good hunting country as the rest of the hunt, for there is far more arable land in proportion to grass in this south-easterly corner of the Tynedale country, and some of this arable is very holding. Callerton Hall used to be a frequent meet for this part of the country, and the best covert on the estate is—perhaps I should say was—the whin at Hold House. This covert I saw drawn half a dozen times in two seasons, and there were never fewer than three or four foxes in it. One rather peculiar hunt I remember from it, nearly all of which took place in the Morpeth country. It was not a fast hunt, nor a particularly good one, but it ended with a kill, after a seven-mile point. Hounds ran east, crossing the high road a mile north of Woolsington Hall, and going on by Dinnington, ran to Seaton Burn House, killing their fox in the garden. The late Mr. Frank Snowball, who then lived there, entertained the field, and I remember a discussion in his dining-room as to how far some of us were from home—Callerton, it may be mentioned, is further from the kennels at Stagshaw Bank than any other meet of the Tynedale Hounds—and it transpired that Mr. Straker, the Tynedale M.F.H., was over thirty miles from the Leazes, Hexham, where he lived. And in those days Mr. Straker rode hacks to the meets, and home again at night. I reckoned that that day—for they drew again at Darras Hall and had another run—he must have ridden nearer eighty than seventy miles.

The village of Stamfordham, thirteen miles north-west of Newcastle, is the centre of the Friday country, and in some degree the capital of the Tynedale Hunt. It is a plain, rather old-fashioned village built round a green, in the midst of a pleasant agricultural country, and has nothing remarkable about it except that it contains a great deal of stabling, which is taken up by various members of the Tynedale Hunt. It is central for the whole country, but is not a residential village, for it chiefly consists of farm buildings, stables, public-houses, a few shops, and a good many cottages. The river Pont runs through it, and there are good coverts within a mile or two on every side. I must, however, deal with the principal public-

house first, for of this place I have very lively recollections. The Bay Horse is the hostelry in question, and in the year 1873 the late Mr. Percy Taylor was in want of a house in the centre of the Tynedale Hunt, and, being unable to find one, bought the Bay Horse—which happened to be in the market—installed himself in the first floor, and brought half a dozen good-looking young horses to the stables. He hunted the three days each week, and on off days drove a high dogcart—the vogue in those days—to Newcastle to get his hair cut and so forth. Now Percy Taylor was a friend and an old school-fellow of mine, and he quickly asked me to come and inspect his new quarters, and offered to mount me on the Friday of a certain week and again on the Monday. About the Friday's hunting I have no recollection, except that Percy came home with a brush in his pocket, that two or three friends arrived for dinner, and that later in the evening a regular levée of village folk was held, Percy, in evening scarlet and using the brush as a chairman's mallet, presiding over a curious assemblage, which included the village policeman, the man who drove the 'bus to Newcastle, the local saddler, and others. All went well until closing time, when a deputation of Stamfordham wives appeared at the head of the stairs, each one claiming her husband and marching him off. After breakfast on the following morning there was an adjournment to the paddock behind the stable, and all the horses, except those which had been hunted on the previous day, were brought out, saddled, and bridled. Then began all sorts of schooling performances, which the horses did not really want, and at length the party got betting as to whether they could retain a half-crown piece between either knee and the saddle whilst riding over a flight of hurdles. There was a good deal of fun over this, and I have a recollection of winning many half-crowns, and losing them again by trying to keep three or four in place at the same time. The horses worked as if it was their regular business, but there was one youngster (we were all mere boys) who dropped his coins every time and was in despair, until Martin, the stud groom, appeared with two large flat tea cakes, and told him to try them instead of a coin. The youngster got up in great glee, having jammed a teacake under each knee; but this time he could not keep his seat, let alone the teacakes,

all three going over the horse's head as he skimmed the hurdle. This Martin was by way of being a poet in his own estimation, and during that winter, when his master and I were shooting in another part of the country, and a daily bulletin as to the health of the stud was required, one came by wire as follows:

“ All blooming well, no cause for sorrow,  
Five hunters true, namely, Edinboro',  
Pilot, Springwell, Rose, and Vixen,  
And Martin, that'll make the six 'un.”

Springwell was as fine a hunter as I ever rode, but a hard puller, and Percy never cared much for him, the result being that I had many a good ride on him with the Tynedale, and one or two with the Morpeth. The horse made a long price (I forget how much) when the stud was broken up, and when, as has been mentioned, a horse named Simon went to the late Sir Wm. Eden for 300gs. Simon was better looking than Springwell, but I, who rode them both, preferred the latter, who had an extraordinary stride and great pace for a hunter.

*A propos* some of the very long runs which the Tynedale have had from time to time, I have had several letters, and one of these is, I am sorry to say, undecipherable. Even printers, accustomed to all sorts of handwriting, have failed to read it, and this is in a great measure due to the fact that the correspondent has written with a faint pencil all over a single sheet of paper, crossing and recrossing, and leaving many of his words unfinished. I think the name Stamfordham occurs more than once, and there appears to be something about Cornish and a particular horse, but nothing definite can be gathered from the epistle. From Mr. John Robson, of Newton, Bellingham, whose name was mentioned in connection with the great run from Clapheaton, I have received a letter throwing further light on the hunt referred to, and Mr. Robson incloses me another letter which refers to a great run which had an even longer point. On this last occasion hounds met at The Highlander, which is on the North road from Newcastle and from two to three miles south of Belsay, and on the Morpeth border. They ran right across the northern part of the Tynedale country, reaching the Border country at Lee Hall, and the point (to Lee Hall) is fully fifteen miles. I cannot find Coat Hill on my map, but Lee Hall is

on the river Rede—"the river" referred to in the letter—and "Uncle Hunter" is the late Mr. Hunter Allgood, of Nunwick, who was Master after Major Bell retired. Unfortunately, Mr. Robson's correspondent cannot remember the date of this run, but adds in her covering letter that an earlier Mr. Allgood, presumably the father of Mr. Hunter Allgood, and the Rev. James Allgood (His Reverence), used to ask the Haydon or the Slaley hounds to draw his covert every year, and the Rev. Mr. Allgood remembered a good hunt from Countess Park to St. Oswald's, where they clashed with Sir Matthew White Ridley's hounds. Whether this particular hunt was achieved by the Haydon or the Slaley is not stated, but the point is a long one, for St. Oswald's is on the military road, and not more than two or three miles from the Tynedale kennels at Stagshaw Bank. The elder Mr. Allgood used also to ask Mr. James, of Otterburn, and his hounds in the holidays, and mention is made of a fine run which ended at Canon Bird's plantation (believed to have been since cut down).

"Newton, Bellingham, July 27th, 1916.

"Shotley, Dear Sir,—In your interesting article on hunting you made one mistake when you say I joined the Hareshaw run. I was there at the meet, and was in it all the way. Hounds ran fairly fast to Fourlaws, when there was a check, and afterwards it was slow hunting across the Rede Valley till the fox jumped up in some rough heather in Hareshaw, and the delight of Cornish when his hounds knocked the fox over was a treat to witness. It was a little vixen fox which must have been the original one, as hounds never entered a covert. The best run I ever had with the Tynedale, though it had no point, was from Nunwick, when we had killed two foxes with the Border, and, finishing near Wark, sent hounds home and joined the Tynedale. The pace was very fast; in fact, hounds were never once touched. Sewingshields was his point, but, leaving it on the right, he ran alongside the military road to Teppermuir, when he turned north by Hatheridge to Haughton, then up the river past Nunwick and Parkend to Wark, and about a mile up the river, where he was killed. Cornish was a very proud man, as every hound was up. Tired and dead horses were left at every farm from Tepper-

muir, and very few would have seen the finish except that after leaving there hounds were always on the outside of the field. The longest run they would ever have except that across the Coquet which you mention was one from Belsay to Shitlington Crags, which he could not reach. The late Rev. James Allgood had a pack at Nunwick, and old Joe Buchous, who is still living, saw fox, hounds, and field all in the Tyne together, the fox having lain down on a stone in the river at Lee Hall. I inclose a letter from Mrs. R. Bell, *née* Allgood, describing it, and it and these notes may interest you. —Sincerely yours,

JOHN ROBSON."

" Drew Bitchfield first, and found; ran through Bygate, which was an open covert, Belsay Dene, skirted Capheaton, through Lake Plantation, Great Law, left Merryshields on right, past Great Bavington, New Onstead, left Thockrington on south, past North Heugh, across Watling Street at Waterfalls, leaving Tone to the south, past Lowshield Green, down to Lee Hall; crossed North Tyne there, up the hills, crossed Bellingham turnpike, and killed him in the open at Coat Hill. The fox, hounds, and horses were all in the river together at Lee Hall; the fox jumped up on Lee Hall Islands. The country was very dry indeed. Jim Firr, the whip, was the first into the river. Those up were Major Bell (the Master), Jim Firr, Swan and Mather, and J. Allgood. The only check—could hardly be called a check—was at Lowshield Green. Swan was, I think, a North Countryman, a very light weight, who was very keen, called 'Dickie's Swan,' mentioned in that 'Run with the Tynedale Hounds' which I expect you have; he once cried when he missed a run! Mather, I think, was a very hard riding farmer; do you know where he lived? Mr. Riddell, of Cheeseburn, had a bad fall over that wall running west from North Onstead; His Reverence often showed me the place, and Uncle Hunter stopped with him. He also often showed me where they killed the fox, close to that old tall thorn hedge which is between the road and the Coat Hill Plantation."

There is no doubt whatever that the Tynedale hounds have had over a period of years many hunts of great length, and at various times when I have been hundreds of miles away I have heard of fine hunts and great points the particulars of



which never reached the *Field*, though as a general rule there was some account of them in the local Press. I am inclined to think also that more of these very good hunts have been from east to west or *vice versâ* than from north to south or the reverse way. The Tynedale Friday country is a wonderful hunting locality, and except for a small district at the southern end of the hunt which has been mentioned it is entirely free from plough land, and consists of wide grass pastures, for the most part well drained, and separated by thorn fences, most of which are on a bank. The stone wall which is greatly in evidence in the Monday country does not extend to the Stamfordham-Belsay district. Not that there are no walls in this district, but there are fewer on the eastern boundary of the hunt than on the west and north-western sides, and of course hounds frequently run from one district to another. Stamfordham is the centre of this Friday country, and within two or three miles of the village are many excellent coverts. On the south-east of Stamfordham there are the Cheeseburn Grange coverts, and a mile or two further south fine gorses called Dodley Whin and Harlow Hill Whin, which last-named place is looked after by the Bell family of Harlow Hill, and, as far as my experience goes, generally holds not one but four or five foxes, even quite late in the season. From Harlow Hill foxes may go to the strong riverside covert of Horsley Wood, or they may go to the Cheeseburn district, and this is what I have seen them do most frequently. All hunting people, however, know that it is impossible to be certain as to which way any particular fox may go from any given covert. Indeed, one of the great charms of the sport of hunting is its infinite variety. Hounds may draw a covert half a dozen times in a few weeks, find every time, and never go twice over the same line. There are, however, as most hunting men of experience know, certain foxes from time to time who will make some particular point with great regularity. Such foxes are to be found occasionally in every country, and as a rule such foxes are hardy customers and tricky, able to baffle hounds time after time, but generally caught at last. Sometimes it happens that huntsmen, Masters, and even some of the field may know these "regulars" by sight, and my old friend the late John

Greenwell, of Broomshields, knew his own foxes at a glance, and many of his neighbours' foxes as well. But then he was constantly among them, for not only did he do a lot of earth-stopping, but he watched foxes at play right through the summer, and, having a quick eye, he noticed little peculiarities, and more especially peculiarities of action. He used to say that half a dozen foxes would all trot and gallop in slightly different form, and I am much inclined to believe that he was right, for this variation of action can be found in most hounds, and to a much greater extent in horses. Look at any field of hunters galloping over the open, and there will be as many styles of going as there are horses in sight. It is the same, too, in a show ring, and here the action can be studied. How often, too, when hunting, does one recognise a horse that is quite a long way off by his action, and before his rider can be plainly discerned.

#### COVERTS ROUND STAMFORDHAM.

West and north of Stamfordham is a very fine covert called the Fens, which lies high on a hillside, and not as the name suggests in a hollow. Due west are the Matfen coverts, which have been mentioned in connection with the Monday country, while on the east side of the village are the Heugh covert, certain plantations about Dalton and Dissington Hall, and a mile further on East Dissington, a capital covert, and a certain find. Further north, between Dissington and Belsay, is Milbourne Dene, through which flows a brook, called, I think, the Black Heddon Brook. Some years ago hounds had run a fox into the Dene and hunted steadily up it. It was in mid-winter, and the brook, which no doubt is a trickle in summer time, was greatly swollen, and the banks almost hidden. Towards the western end of the Dene there is a ford, with a narrow wicket gate in front of it, and the field had to pull up and go through in single file. The entrance to the ford beyond the wicket was narrow also, and as horses began to be a little crowded, one standing within two or three yards of the bank shot out and jumped the brook, doing this "on his own" to the amazement of his rider. Almost immediately other horses were infected with the same idea, and one or two of the field who were not in the least inclined for a biggish water jump found themselves carried over or into the water. It was

a comic scene, but it only lasted for a few minutes, and meantime hounds were going on alongside the brook, and the leaders of the field had no idea what was occurring behind. North of Milbourne is the Belsay district, but the two places are separated by a wildish tract of grazing land, in which is located Bitchfield Whin, the starting point of the hunt to Lee Hall described above. This is a fine covert, and I have never seen it drawn blank, but I do not think I have been there more than seven or eight times when hounds have drawn it. Milbourne, East Dissington, Bitchfield, and some of the other Belsay coverts are right on the Morpeth border, and foxes found therein are just as likely to go into the Kirkley district of the Morpeth hunt as to remain in Tynedale country. Indeed, I have seen the pack cross and recross the high road which forms the boundary half a dozen times in the day. Round Belsay Hall there are the Lake Coverts, the Bantam, and a plantation round the village, which, if I recollect rightly, is called the School Plantation. The Lake Covert is probably the best of these, but *the* covert of the Belsay Estate is Bygate, which is described as "an open covert" in the account of the Lee Hall Hunt in Major Bell's master-ship. Judging from the size of the trees, Bygate was probably very recently planted at the time referred to, but of late years it has been a wonderful covert, there being any amount of lying, with heather, gorse, and bracken still growing among the trees. The covert is long and narrow at the Belsay end, but wider at the western end, and it is on a sloping hill, and according to my experience, remarkably dry. Just north of it is a narrow plantation—at right angles to the western end of Bygate—but this I always look upon almost as part of Bygate, and, anyhow, if the last named is drawn, it is good odds that the other place—called, I think, the Brick Kilns—is disturbed. What I like best about Bygate is that it affords constant proof of the fact that foxes and pheasants can dwell in amity, for I have never been at Bygate and found it untenanted by very considerable numbers of either. I remember once being on a ride in the middle of the covert, when four or five foxes crossed within a few minutes, and at the same time pheasants were rising in great numbers, and going either to the Brick Kilns or the Lake Wood. Fine, high-

flying birds they were, too, for from my position near the top of the hill I could command a great deal of country. I imagine that the Capheaton coverts in the Monday country are a very favourite point with Bygate foxes, but in this part of the Tynedale Hunt it makes absolutely no matter what direction is taken, for the country is all excellent galloping ground, and the coverts are nicely separated. It is, in fact, a grand country, worth taking a lot of trouble to reach, but as likely as any country in the kingdom to reward the visitor with something special in the way of a hunt. Its foxes are numerous and strong, well looked after, and for the most part travellers, and when you add to that that they are hunted by a magnificent pack of big, upstanding hounds, and that the "management"—so to speak—is in most capable hands of great experience, you have such possibilities for sport as are only vouchsafed to a few of the very best countries in the kingdom.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MORPETH COUNTRY.

Mention has been made of the Morpeth country, and of this hunt I know just enough to write of it in terms of praise, but my actual hunting days passed in it have been few and far between, and extend over a great number of years. In connection with the Tynedale it has been explained that the hunt now known as the Morpeth was formed by Sir Matthew White Ridley in 1818, and was continued by Sir Matthew and his son until 1844, when the country was divided, Mr. Watson, of North Seaton, and Mr. Vaughan taking the southern and western side of Sir Matthew's country, while Lord Elcho (afterwards Lord Wemyss) took over the north side. This is the short account which is given in *Baily's Hunting Directory*, but some years ago I had occasion to inquire as to the early masterships of the Morpeth, and found evidence to the effect that the founder of the pack hunted the country until his death in 1836, that his son took on the hounds for a couple of seasons, and in 1838 was succeeded by Mr. Riddell, of Cheeseburn Grange, and Mr. Matthew Clayton, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, who acted as joint Masters until 1844, when the country was split up in the manner which has been stated. Certain it is that Sir Matthew White Ridley hunted a very large tract of country, having his principal kennels at Blagdon. Whether he had supplementary kennels I do not know, but all the Tynedale country north of the river Tyne was included in his hunt, and hounds must have had to travel very long distances to covert at times. Nor do I know how far the hunt extended north of the Coquet, into what is now the Percy country, but I imagine that it was the country beyond the



Coquet which Lord Elcho took over. The enthusiast just named came to Northumberland in 1843, and began hunting in the north of the country, but in the following year he seems to have also had the district between the rivers Coquet and Alne as well, and he is credited with this district in *Hobson's Hunting Atlas*, which was published a few years later. I have always understood that between 1844 and 1854 there were kennels at Belsay, and these would be more central for a country which included the present Morpeth and Tynedale hunts than Blagdon, Belsay being almost in the centre of the two hunts. According to tradition, the Ridley hounds were famous for long hunts, and on January 30th, 1832, they ran from Dissington Whin (in the Tynedale country) to the coast at North Seaton, which means a point of great length.

But *à propos* of what has been just written, I may refer my readers to certain extracts which have been quoted from *Sykes's Local Records*, and which deal with the Morpeth country. From these extracts it would appear that the second Sir Matthew White Ridley—who is referred to in the extracts—handed the hounds over to the committee immediately after his father's death, and not at a later period, as has been very broadly stated, and that, in fact, this small committee period came in between the masterships of the two Sir M. W. Riddleys. Also it is evident that the hounds belonged to the Riddleys until they were sold in 1845—after the arrival on the scene of Lord Elcho in the north, Mr. Watson, of North Seaton, in the centre, and Mr. Nicholas Maughan on the west of the country. But how long the committee of two—or of three according to local records—was in existence, and at what exact date, I have no particular evidence, except tradition, which places the period at two seasons. Perhaps some reader of this book may be able to clear up this point, and may also have information as to the Belsay kennels, how long they were used, and whether the pack was there in its entirety—and for how long—or whether the kennel was only a supplementary one to the larger kennel at Blagdon.

In 1854 there were considerable changes as regards the hunting of South Northumberland and the boundaries of the

various hunts. The Morpeth and Tynedale countries were formed, and that formation has been held to ever since. Mr. Nicholas Maughan had been hunting part of the present Tynedale country for some years before the final change was made, and possibly the "Ridley" hounds, as they were called when the kennels were at Belsay, did not go so far south-west as Sir Matthew White Ridley had done, but about this I am not certain, and perhaps what occurred nearly seventy years ago is not of great moment just now. But in 1854, when Major Bell became Master of the Tynedale—as it now is—Mr. John Cookson, of Meldon, took the Morpeth, and the boundary was fixed at the main road which runs from Newcastle through Ponteland and Belsay to Cambo, and I am inclined to think that the best of the Morpeth country lies between this high road and the Newcastle to Morpeth coach road. This is a district of sound grass of similar character to the best of the Tynedale country, where the inclosures are for the most part large, and the fences either level with the field or on a small bank. It is, in fact, essentially a riding country, and all the northern portion of it is free from population. At the southern end of this district there are various collieries, and there are more east of the Newcastle to Morpeth road, but all the northern and western side of the hunt is fine open country, slightly undulating south of the river Wansbeck, and more hilly between the Wansbeck and Coquet—especially on the north-west. The Wansbeck flows right through the centre of the country, and east of Morpeth are several miles of wooded banks, to which foxes hang at times. Indeed, I spent a morning there with hounds a few years ago, and though there were foxes innumerable, we never went far from the banks. There is also the river Pont, some half dozen miles south of the Wansbeck, and this stream, which is only a brook in the western part of the Tynedale country, becomes a formidable affair east of the village of Ponteland, and it also has a mile or two of wooded banks in the neighbourhood of Hartford Bridge. Between the Wansbeck and the Coquet there is some plough land, especially near the sea, and also one or two large collieries; but the land near Bothal—famous as a great coursing ground—is mostly grass, and as a matter of fact it is

estimated that 70 per cent. of the Morpeth country is grass, 20 per cent. moorland and woodland, and only 5 per cent. under the plough. It will be understood, then, that the country is, like its neighbour, the Tynedale, essentially a grass one, and in pre-war days fields were often of great size, more especially when hounds met in the Whalton country. Since the war Major W. W. Burdon has been hunting this eastern part of the Morpeth country two days a week, by arrangement with the Morpeth Hunt.

Mr. John Cookson's mastership extended over a period of nineteen years, and he was followed by his son, the late Mr. John Blencowe Cookson, who held office until 1894, the father and son thus having control of the Morpeth hunt for a period of forty years. The younger Mr. Cookson was his own huntsman, and was one of the smartest amateur huntsmen of his day. He rode hard, and had a wonderfully good eye for what hounds were doing, besides having great knowledge of the sport. He was extraordinarily quick in the field, too, and I once recollect Mr. Maynard (during his mastership of the North Durham) being annoyed at the slowness of his own huntsman, and shouting out: "I'll send you to have a day with the Morpeth, so that you may see how quick a huntsman can be." The Cookson era was a most successful one, and the hunt exceedingly popular, and it need hardly be said a very high average of sport was maintained. My first visits to the Morpeth were paid during the last years of the elder Mr. Cookson's mastership, and between 1873 and 1875, and as I went from Stamfordham with the late Mr. Percy Taylor I generally saw hounds in their best country. Towards the end of the 'seventies I had a fair number of days with the pack on the Newcastle side of the country, riding hirelings obtained at Newcastle, and having as a rule John Greenwell for my companion. My old friend dearly loved a day in a strange country, and together we visited many northern hunts; but for a time he was a good deal inclined to the Morpeth, firstly because hirelings in good condition were in those days always to be found in Newcastle, and, secondly, because he could stay comfortably at the long defunct North-umberland Club in Westgate-road, which was in those days a great resort of northern hunting men. Then, too, John

Greenwell sold a couple of high-class hunters to Mr. J. B. Cookson during the latter's mastership, and I remember we made a pilgrimage to a Woolsington meet to see how these horses performed in their new country. We had heard that both were likely to be out that day, but owing to a train journey before we got our horses we were late, and when we reached the scene of the meet hounds had found (at Woolsington) and gone north. We followed on, and caught them up on Prestwick Carr, where hounds had checked, and almost immediately we saw the Master-huntsman jump a big and very full "stell"—a local name for a wide, open drain—on one of the Broomshields horses. This was a chestnut which had been bred at Broomshields, and which I had had for the greater part of the previous season. He was a big, powerful horse by the great hurdle racer, Hesper—who was then, or had been standing shortly before, at Woodlands, in the North Durham country—and in the following spring he won a joint point-to-point race of the Tynedale and Morpeth hunts, which was held at the "Highlander," near Belsay, and which was one of the first point-to-points run in the north of England. John Peel, as the horse was called in his young days, was ridden by Mr. Charles Hunter, and heavy and light weights ran together, but horses not ridden by their owners put up 7lb. extra. "John Peel" came in alone, winning by perhaps 150 yards, and I can remember that there was a desperate finish among the heavy weights, in which Mr. Matthew Liddell (Tynedale) just beat the Master of the Morpeth by a head or a neck on the post. Point-to-point races have altered in character since those days, but to the best of my recollection this one was run on a straight course of four miles, with no turn. Many years afterwards Mr. Cookson told me that "John Peel" did nine seasons, carrying either his owner or the kennel huntsman and that he was one of the best horses he had ever had at Meldon. He was six years old when Mr. Cookson bought him.

When Mr. J. B. Cookson resigned the Morpeth country in 1894 he was succeeded by Mr. R. Clayton Swan, who had formerly been Master of the Sinnington, and has since been Master of the Blankney. Mr. Swan was the first Master of the Morpeth who was not a native of the district, but he

was—and is—an enthusiast, and his mastership was a successful one, most particularly as regards the pack, which was enormously improved during the eight seasons Mr. Swan had the hounds. I never saw the Morpeth during this period, but frequently heard what a fine pack they were and what good sport they showed, and the prowess of the pack is proved by the fact that when Mr. Swan resigned in 1902 he sold his hounds privately to Mr. Cresswell for £3,000, the sum to be paid having been agreed upon by hound experts. Mr. Cresswell was then leaving the Percy after a mastership of six seasons, but he never went to the Morpeth after all, but passed the pack on at (I believe) a slight discount to Mr. Frank Buddle Atkinson, who is in office to the present day. Mr. Atkinson, who will be remembered by racing men as one of the best soldier jockeys of his day, and who at one time owned many high-class cross-country horses, has thoroughly maintained the status of the kennel, the blood of which is now to be found in nearly all the northern hunts. Personally, I have seen hounds that were excellent in their work in other packs, but sired by Morpeth hounds, and I know, for example, that Morpeth Printer, bred by Mr. Swan in 1900, did immense good in many northern kennels. Printer was by the Morpeth Glenwood, a son of the Belvoir Watchman, who was by the famous Belvoir Gambler out of Primrose, by the Warwickshire Warlock. Another hound from the Morpeth kennels I used to hear of as siring good stock in other kennels a few years ago was Solomon, who was by the Belvoir Dasher, a son of Belvoir Dexter—the last named, to my mind, the best-looking hound I ever saw, and he, like Morpeth Printer, was by the Belvoir Watchman. Some years ago I was one of the judges at a Morpeth puppy show, and at the time gave some account of the pack in the *Field*, and I was last at the River Green kennels just a week before war was declared, and when the grave situation of the European Powers was more talked about than the excellent lot of puppies that were judged that day. During Mr. Atkinson's mastership I have seen the pack at work on two or three occasions, but have not been lucky enough to come in for one of their big hunts. Once, however, I saw a very large field after a meet at High



House, when no fewer than sixty scarlets were counted by a lady member of the hunt. Of the sport on that day I remember that hounds divided, and that the section I followed had a pretty forty minutes, going south to the Blagdon Coverts, and also that the rain of the afternoon was heavy enough to go through the thickest of hunting clothes. I must add that whenever I have been to the Morpeth country I have always found an exceptionally pleasant—and perhaps I may add jovial—field. The stranger was made welcome in a manner that is greatly appreciated, and offers of hospitality were as numerous as foxes in the coverts. The Morpeth have the advantage of a very efficient secretary in Mr. F. Straker, of Angerton Hall, a brother of the Masters of the Tynedale and Zetland Hunts, and there is a wonderful system all over the country for dealing with wire, poultry damage, and so forth, which was inaugurated some years ago. The country is parcelled out into districts, about thirty, I believe, and each district is looked after by a member of the hunt, many of the men who act being themselves farmers. The upshot is that matters are made very smooth for the hard riders of the hunt, and the system—which, by the way, is now in vogue on somewhat similar lines in many hunts—might well be copied where wire is troublesome and the means of dealing with it vague. In these days it is of little use fighting against what appears to be the cheapest form of fencing, but there are few places in which arrangements for taking the wire down during the hunting season cannot be made, and the system of making small districts with one man to look after each of them seems to be absolutely the best plan which it is possible to adopt.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE ZETLAND HUNT.

Probably some of my readers may be getting tired of the frequent references in this volume to the late John Greenwell, of Broomshields, but it is impossible for me to write of the earlier hunting which I saw without bringing his name in. He was such an enthusiastic and whole-hearted foxhunter, such a preserver of foxes, and was so deeply versed in foxlore, that it was a pleasure for anyone of similar tastes to go about with him. Together in schoolboy days we learnt something of the mysteries of earth stopping, and it was in his company that I first saw anything of what is now the Zetland country. But this was during the late Mr. Cradock's time, and before Lord Zetland took the country more than fifty years ago. And first I may explain for the benefit of those who do not know the district that the Zetland country is partly in Durham and partly in Yorkshire, the two districts being of about equal size, and divided by the river Tees as it flows from Barnard Castle to Croft. Hounds go west of Barnard Castle on both banks of the river, but the best part of the hunt, broadly speaking, has Darlington at its eastern end, and Barnard Castle in Durham and Richmond in Yorkshire at its western end. My first recollections of the pack are, however, with the extreme northern part of the hunt, which extends as far as the river Wear—which, indeed, separates it from the North Durham country for a considerable distance, in the neighbourhood of Wolsingham, Witton-le-Wear, and Etherley. It was this part of Mr. Cradock's hunt that I first saw, more particularly when hounds were in the neighbourhood of Hamsterley, or at the Black Banks, a fir covert overhanging the Wear, and to the best of my knowledge the most northerly covert drawn

by the pack. Only once in Mr. Cradock's day did I see hounds draw the Black Banks (which are, I believe, the property of Mr. Herbert Straker, the joint Master of the Zetland), but I have seen Lord Zetland's hounds there many times since, generally in the late spring, when they had ceased advertising and were trying to mop up a few more foxes in the wilder parts of the hunt. The Black Banks and the neighbouring coverts about Shull, Hoppyland, and St. John's are quite close to the moors, and are what Surtees would have called "extra-parochial." I have not been there for many years, but the place used to swarm with foxes, and Champion used to do his best to prevent them crossing the river. My recollection is that when they did so they generally came back, not necessarily into the Banks, but into some of the other coverts which lie between the entrance of the Bedburn stream to the Wear and the Black Banks. A few miles south of the Banks, round Hamsterley, there is a delectable hunting country, and it was here on many Saturdays that "John" and I found hounds in our pony days and saw many a useful hunt. We had to leave early, however, for he came from Broomshields and I from Woodlands, nearly four miles further north, and not only did we generally want the same ponies for the Durham country on the Monday, but we always had a long distance to travel both before and after hunting. At times hounds would cross the river and run on. Not more than four seasons ago the North Durham ran on to the moors south of Shull, and when I was living at Broomshields in the 'eighties I remember some six or seven couples of hounds running a fox into the main earths on West Carr Hill, but a whipper-in was following on, and he quickly took them away.

I have one very vivid recollection of a big run with Mr. Cradock's hounds. It was, I think, in 1872, and the meet was at Cockfield. It was towards the end of the season, and on the previous day the North Durham were at Colepike Hall, and had one of the worst days I ever remember in that country. There were plenty of foxes, but according to the huntsman they were all vixens, and hounds were stopped from running three or four times and sent home early. With my father I had driven to the meet from Shotley, and he had left the trap at the place of meeting. When I got back to

Colepike about half the field were refreshing, and there was a general grumble at the failure of the sport. Then someone said: "What about Cockfield with Mr. Cradock to-morrow?" and, to cut a long story short, my father sent the horses he and I had been riding to Witton-le-Wear for the night, and we drove home. An early start was made the next morning, for Witton-le-Wear and Shotley are sixteen miles apart, but we knew of field roads for something like two-thirds of the distance, and at Witton-le-Wear we had a ham and eggs breakfast at the inn. These long hacks were thought nothing of fifty years ago, and for some years my father had been going to Mr. Cradock on occasional Saturdays, sending his horse to Witton-le-Wear overnight, or else by the early train to Crook. He nearly always rode himself, avoiding the train, and would pick his horse up either at the meet or at the inn at Witton-le-Wear, as we did on this occasion. Of the first hunt I only remember that we ran to river banks, and that we had a long hack back to the country of the draw, and found at (I think) Butterknowle Whin. There was a great scent, and I have little recollection of how the line went, but hounds went on steadily all the afternoon, and when they killed their fox large ironworks on the outskirts of Darlington seemed to be only a few fields away. Very few got to the end of what was a very fine hunt, and I have no recollection who was "there" and who was not. All I do know is that I arrived at Witton-le-Wear at about seven o'clock, had something to eat, and reached Shotley between ten and eleven, and that my father, who was a heavy man, was several hours in front of me. And here I may mention, with all due diffidence, that it is the really great hunts which live in memory from year to year and are never forgotten. With some packs which I have followed no big hunt stands out, and I am of opinion that when such is the case no really great hunt occurred during my visits. But through the long line of years a fair number of really big hunts stand out like landmarks, and I have been fortunate enough to come in for a considerable number of these. For example, in the first big hunt I ever got through, which was from Lord Bute's plantation—with the Durham County hounds—to Brancepeth, I can actually remember the line and recollect going through the

Sawmill Wood at Woodlands, and two or three miles further, climbing the steep hill to Cornsay village; while I also remember breaking the top rail of a small timber fence near the Monkey's Nest, and last of all, hounds running down the grassy slopes between High Brandon and Brancepeth Castle. Mr. John Harvey gave me the brush on that occasion, and I remember my keen disappointment at discovering it to be a badly mangled and very indifferent piece of fox fur.

So with the Zetland hounds. I have forgotten many days that I had with them in the late 'seventies and early 'eighties, but I have a most powerful recollection of a certain day in the winter of 1883 or the following year. Which year this hunt took place I cannot say for certain, and can only approximately fix the date because I know what horse I was riding. Also I think it was midwinter, for there was snow on the high ground, snow showers in the air, and an overnight frost. The meet was at Greta Bridge, and I think it must have been on a Thursday. John Greenwell and I boxed our horses to Barnard Castle, and arrived at the meet to find a field of not more than twenty, a most remarkably small field for that country, but the weather during the early part of the day was atrocious. Anyhow, hounds drew the Rokeby Coverts, and a lot of foxes were quickly on foot. They stuck to the river banks for some time, but at length one went away due south, and after a nice little hunt of half an hour or so stuck at a rabbit wire which surrounded a belt of young trees. While hounds were breaking him up another fox left the belt, and Champion quickly had hounds on. The exact line I do not remember, but we reached Sedbury after a time, and Champion thought we changed foxes there. We then went near Middleton Tyas, crossed into the Bedale country, and the fox went to ground in a drain close to Pepper Hall—now called Pepper Arden. "John" and I both got to the end, but getting back to Barnard Castle was out of the question, and on the advice of the late "Billy" Forster we made for Darlington, stopping at Croft, and wiring to Barnard Castle for our bags and the horses rugs to be sent to Darlington. On reaching the King's Head Hotel we found that to get ourselves and our horses back to Broomshields that



night was impossible, and as the bags did not arrive until late in the evening we had to dine in hunting clothes. We were lucky enough to find the late John Waldy and another sportsman, whose name I forget, at the hotel, and lucky also to find some old port in fine condition, and the result was that after dinner we arranged to have a day with the Bedale on the morrow, the man who then had the King's Head yard being a letter of hack hunters. Of this Bedale day I have no recollection, except that the meet was at Kipling Cotes, and that my horse slipped into a very wet drain, but on the Saturday morning we took the Zetland meet on our way home, riding the Thursday horses, but had no particular sport.

This Greta Bridge hunt, especially the latter part, from Sedbury to the end, was a very fine one, and a good many who had missed the earlier hunting about Rokeby joined in, but no great number lasted to the end, though I remember that Mr. E. R. Whitwell and Mr. J. B. (now Sir James) Dale were there, and about eight or ten others. Another Zetland hunt which stands out in my memory took place about sixteen years ago. I do not remember the exact date, nor where the meet was—possibly Halnaby—but after some quiet sport hounds found at Straggleton Gate, and ran west towards Uckerby. I had a good start, and was being well carried, but after going for a quarter of an hour or so I saw that, practically, all the field had disappeared, and I did not understand it, for hounds were going on ahead, over a big grass inclosure, and Champion was close to them. Then I saw Champion dodge off on the left to a gate which went under the Richmond railway—hereabouts the boundary between the Zetland and Bedale countries—and heard him shout, but I could not hear what he said. There had been a good deal of rain during the previous week, and a certain amount of flood water was standing out in the fields. I had been through some, and now there was a patch of water, about twenty yards wide, right in front. Hounds splashed through, and I pulled up to a trot, went a few paces into the water, when down went my horse, throwing me well over his shoulder. I fell into about six inches of water, and was wet through on one side only, and as the horse got up on

the right side of the concealed brook I was quickly going again. A quarter of a mile further hounds crossed the railway, and I found a railway crossing close to them, and for another ten minutes saw no one. Hounds had bent to the left, and suddenly all the field were there, having cut off a big corner. I was a good deal chaffed for having taken Uckerby Stell when flooded, but the fact was I had not recognised the brook, and had no idea of its presence, for the flood was subsiding, and there was no great rush of water down the centre of the field.

Hounds ran on to Langton Hall, and, I think, lost their fox near the Gardens. They had made a long point, and I had to ride back to Darlington, to which place I had boxed with the Master of the Braes of Derwent in the morning. We decided that horses had done enough, and I remember riding for two or three miles and then seeing "Darlington, 17" on a finger-post. By this time it had begun to freeze, and when we arrived at the Station Hotel—where we had a change of garments—I opened my coat, and several thin sheets of ice dropped on to the floor. So severe, indeed, was the afternoon frost, that even the warmth of my body had not prevented my wet clothes from freezing. Another good hunt that I saw a year or two later was from Gainford Big Wood, in the Tuesday country on the Durham side of the Tees, through Raby and Streatlam, to the Whin Covert at Westwick—close to Barnard Castle—where the fox vanished entirely. Scores of quick darts in the Thursday country with these hounds have I seen, and I am inclined to think that, given suitable weather conditions, this Thursday country is the best in the hunt. It extends from Croft Spa up the river to beyond Piercebridge, and south to the Bedale border somewhere near Catterick Bridge, and is for the most part a fairly level country, though a little hilly on its western side. In this district there is a good deal more grass than plough, plenty of small coverts and no very big ones, and flying fences everywhere, with a total absence of wire. In the Zetland country the absence of wire is one of the greatest charms of the district. The question of wire was tackled some years ago by Mr. Herbert Straker (the Master) during Lord Zetland's mastership, with the result

that there is practically no wire in the country. There may be an odd wired spot quite close to Darlington, where boy trespass must be provided against, but if so the odd strands are well known. This Thursday country attracts very big fields at ordinary times, for all of it can be reached from Darlington, and some years ago I counted seventy scarlet coats when hounds were drawing one of the small coverts on the Halnaby estate. I have also on the same day seen, in addition to the Zetland field proper, men or women from the Hurworth, Bedale, North and South Durham, York and Ainsty, Cleveland, Tynedale, and Braes of Derwent, and a man who had boxed from Appleby in Westmorland, by the Tebay line. There may have been men from hunts that are even further distant, for it is a simple matter to box along the main line from York, or from Newcastle-on-Tyne to Darlington. The only drawback to this Thursday country is that parts of it may hold a lot of surface water after very heavy rain, and that at times it suffers from fog. Indeed, I have gone twice in recent years to Zetland meets when fog prevented hunting; but this occurs in all flat countries, and occasionally—but nothing like so often—in a hilly country.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SOME YORKSHIRE AND WESTERN MIDLAND HUNTS.

Comparisons are odious, and I have no desire to praise one hunting country at the expense of another. I have, however, received a letter from a sportsman (who does not wish his identity to be revealed) pointing out that I have given more praise to the Tynedale country than I have to the Zetland, which—in his opinion—is the better country of the two. My correspondent does not point out exactly how I have given him this impression, and I myself cannot find anything I have written which seems to convey such an idea, but I have had more to say about the Tynedale than of the famous Yorkshire-Durham hunt for the simple reason that I know the former country better, and have over a long period of years hunted in it much more frequently than in the Zetland country. For example, I have never been in the western part of the Zetland Monday country, and for many years have seldom seen the pack except in the Thursday country, or fairly close to Darlington, on the north side of the Tees. But the fact is that opinions differ enormously as to the merits of hunting countries, and many people form their opinions quite regardless of the true properties of a country from a purely hunting standpoint. My correspondent's complaints as to the Tynedale country is that the banks and stone walls are, from a rider's point of view, less desirable than the fly fences in the Zetland hunt, and also that in the accounts of great hunts of a former period (which were sent to me from various correspondents) there is too much mention of *running* on to the moors. My own opinion, which is no better than that of any man who takes careful note of any hunting country he may be in, is that both countries are far above the average

from almost every point of view, that both are, indeed, exceptionally good; but, because they are not in the least like each other, they—somewhat naturally, perhaps—rather invite comparison. As regards the preponderance of grass over arable land, the Tynedale has much the best of it, and except in the south-east corner of the country, or in the Tyne valley, you may hunt for a month without crossing a ploughed field. The Zetland, on the other hand, has a considerable amount of plough in all the eastern side of the country, but I am inclined to think that even where there is most mixed farming the grass is in the ascendant. In the western part of the hunt this is certainly the case, and it must be remembered that the valley of the Tees is one of the most valuable grazing grounds in the kingdom. It is a part of the original home of the Short-horn, and very much of it is sound old pasture of the very best kind. As regards the fences, you can jump from field to field almost all over the Zetland country, but the stone wall is by no means unknown in the higher-lying part of the hunt. Fly fences are everywhere on the east side of the country, whereas in the Tynedale the obstacles are for the most part “banks,” which the clever hunter does in on and off fashion, or stone walls—often with a sheep rail on the top, or in later days a strand of wire. The invitation fence is now a common object in the Tynedale hunt, and I am inclined to think that in the last-named country there are fewer coverts, and those farther apart than in the Zetland. Both hunts maintain not only a high standard of sport, but an equally high standard of management. Every detail in what may be called the art of maintaining and hunting a country is most carefully considered, and, in fact, both hunts are strictly orthodox models of what a high-class hunt should be.

As regards running on to the moors it appears to be the fact that in some of those great runs with the Tynedale the moors were reached, but these were undoubtedly exceptional cases, probably due to the fact that hounds were hunting a travelling fox who had been found far away from his moorland home. Personally, in all my visits to the Tynedale, I have never seen hounds on the heather, but with the North Durham and the Braes of Derwent I have known many foxes go to the moors, especially in the month of January, and I have



also noticed that in some seasons hounds will constantly travel to the neighbourhood of the moors, while at other times the whole season will be got through without a single visit to the moors. I have seen the Zetland on the moors south of Wolsingham on many occasions some years ago, and many years ago I saw the Bedale reach the moors very quickly from the coverts at Studley Royal. The fact is that the backbone of England, extending from the Scottish border to as far south as Cannock Chase, is almost entirely moorland through its centre and highest parts, and where there are hunts on either side of this backbone hounds will naturally be there at times. But in all the hunts I have written about there is no real moorland hunting, as in the Border country, and if hounds go on to the heather it is because they are following a fox. And, curiously enough, when this does occur foxes seldom go far when once the heather is reached, but twist back to the ordinary country—which close to the moors is almost invariably rough pasture land. It may be that an odd fox will make for a certain refuge that he knows of, and I can recollect that in one or two seasons the Braes of Derwent ran several foxes to ground in some rocks, which were on the open moor at a farm named Lamb Shields, and just about a mile from the beginning of the moor. These rocks, I may add, are not more than a mile and a half from a large and important covert, which is drawn about once in three weeks, and I can truly affirm that not one in twenty of the many foxes found there goes towards the moors—since the head of earths just referred to were walled up. In all probability foxes do not care about travelling through the heather, and cannot go so fast through it as hounds can; they (the foxes) stick to the burnt places, sheep paths, and cart tracks when possible, and will, as far as my experience goes, avoid all the stronger growing heather.

At various times I have seen all the Yorkshire packs in the field except the Badsworth, the Goathland, and the Bilsdale. The Bedale I have seen at odd times, chiefly in their Friday country, and, as confirmation of how opinions as to the merits of hunting countries vary, I may mention how I heard a man affirm not long ago that the Bedale was much the best of the Yorkshire countries, and far superior to the Zetland. It may be, for all I know, for I have only seen small portions

of it, but I liked what I have seen, and my recollections of the hunt go back to the mastership of Mr. John Booth, in the 'seventies, but I was never lucky enough to fall in for a really good hunt. About the same period I saw the Hurworth on many Saturdays, when the late Lord Londonderry (then Lord Castlereagh) was master. During one winter I was at Croft during many "week-ends," and hunting with the Hurworth naturally came in my way, and what I rode were mostly thoroughbreds from the Croft stud, which at that time was owned by Mrs. Winteringham and her son "Johnny," who provided me with several mounts, most of them very curiously behaved, tail foremost brutes. One of these was a barren brood mare, who could gallop in great form, but when she arrived at a fence she would either go straight through it without rising or would whip round and bolt. After riding this mare I used to come home with half a dozen thorns sticking in my legs. The York and Ainsty I first saw during Colonel Fairfax's mastership, coming by train from Darlington, with John Greenwell. The meet was at Sessay, and our slow train arrived long before hounds were due, but several of the York contingent had also arrived by train, and the waiting-room was besieged by a crowd who clamoured for a fire on ~~an~~ extremely cold morning. I mention this merely to let the present generation know the difficulties hunting people had to contend with forty years ago, if they attended a distant meet by train. No doubt at an earlier period hacks would have been requisitioned for such a distance, but when the railways came they were, naturally enough, taken advantage of by both horses and their owners. But there were few, if any, hunting specials in those days, and horses were only allowed on the slowest stop-at-all-stations train. It happened also that there were very early morning trains on most of the branch lines, and, for example, when hunting from Shotley with any of the packs in the Darlington district, one had to leave a station named Blackhill—two miles from Shotley—before seven in the morning, and after reaching Darlington there was at least an hour for breakfast before it was necessary to leave for the meet. Now, the York and Ainsty country is the most irregular as regards conformation of any in the kingdom. To give some idea of its length, it may be explained that the Great Northern

and North-Eastern main line to Edinburgh enters it south of Selby—I believe the river Aire divides it from the Badsworth—and leaves it a mile or two south of Thirsk. It must be nearly forty miles from its most southern to its most northern point, and in places, more especially near York, it is very narrow indeed. Lord Middleton meets at the “Fourth Milestone, Stockton Forest,” which is, as the name suggests, four miles out of York on the north-east, and the Bramham Moor come to within about half a dozen miles of the city on the west. It will be understood, then, that members of the York and Ainsty hunt who attend as many meets as possible had—and still have—to use the train very freely as a covert hack.

Now, in normal times, of course—the motor is doubtless greatly used, but at the time I am writing of the early morning trains did duty, and as Sessay was not far from twenty miles from York, all the York contingent went there by train. North-west of York the York and Ainsty country includes a large district between the Bedale and the Bramham Moor countries, which goes a long way west, up the Nidd Valley, and contains a wild sporting country adjoining the moors. This part of the hunt, broadly speaking, lies between Knaresborough and Ripon, and must be at least forty miles from the Selby district of the same hunt. The Ainsty proper is south of York, and here, too, the country widens out to the Holder-ness border. I only once had a day in that district, where hounds had a brilliant forty minutes, but the going was terribly deep, and I never remember seeing so many beaten horses in one hunt. I imagine that Melbourne country is always deep in wet weather, but when I was there a heavy fall of snow had just disappeared, and the going was worse than usual.

I have mislaid or lost a number of old diaries and cuttings—chiefly from local newspapers—and therefore I am unable to give dates, but on one of my few visits to the York and Ainsty country I remember a curious thing. It was in the Easingwold district, and hounds had hunted a fox well for the best part of an hour, when they ran, with a fine cry, into a not very large spinney of old trees. The field came up, and in a minute or two there was silence in the covert. Every one thought the fox had been killed, and huntsman and

whippers-in disappeared into the covert. Five minutes passed, and the field rode round to the far side, thinking the huntsman had taken out the fox to break him up. Then suddenly the huntsman appeared, cast his hounds all round the covert, but could not hit off his fox. Then there was a consultation among the authorities, and it transpired that hounds had thrown up in the centre of the covert, and could make nothing more of it. Orders to draw another place were given, and the cavalcade moved off, but before a quarter of a mile had been covered there came a ringing view holloa from the covert which had just been left. Hounds were rushed back, and as the holloas were from inside hounds were taken in. What they found was that the late Mr. J. H. Greaves, of Sutton on the Forest, had viewed the fox quite twenty feet up a tree, and he (the fox) had reached his security through running up the trunk of a fallen tree which was resting against the sound one. Someone climbed the tree, the fox dropped down, then another, and, I think, a third, but I will not trust my memory beyond a brace of foxes. Anyhow, one was killed, and a second gave another hunt, and examination revealed the fact that by jumping some five feet on to a suspended branch, foxes had a fine ladder which took them into security, and from the marks on this ladder it was plain that it had been in use for long enough. All hunting people know that tree-climbing foxes are by no means uncommon.

The first I ever saw came from a willow by the side of a brook in the Heythrop country, and the fox—or at all events one from the same place—I saw hunted twice in the same season. But the bowl where the fox curled up at the top of an old cut willow was not more than eight feet above the ground, and this is about the usual height for a tree-fox. The York and Ainsty fox was, however, quite twenty feet above the ground, and was the only fox I ever knew of who did the ladder trick. When the late Mr. John Clavering was living at Greencroft in the county of Durham I once went there for a day's rook shooting at the end of May. Mr. Clavering did not hunt, but was a fine fox preserver and before we began on the rooks he told me he could show me a litter of cubs. I knew all the Greencroft coverts well, as I frequently shot there, and had seen them drawn by hounds scores



of times, but I knew of no earth where I was likely to see cubs, and was slightly incredulous. But the keeper piloted us into the Tower Wood, the largest covert on the estate, and in a quarter which had been newly planted, and through which we crept very quietly, were three or four cubs playing round a tree. After a minute or two they disappeared, and the keeper showed us a young spruce fir which had grown in width, but not in height. It spread out fan-shape, and close to the top in a very sheltered position about four feet from the ground, the litter had been reared. In that particular part of the country a very big majority of the litters of foxes are born and brought up below the earth, and though I have known of vixens having their cubs above ground in the depths of a strong gorse covert the fox born in the open is probably as scarce in the north as the stub-bred fox is common in the south of England.

Owing to various circumstances which need not be explained, because they would not be interesting to the reader, it was my good fortune when a boy to see odd days of sport in various parts of the country during Christmas or Easter holidays. With me, when visiting any place away from home, my instant desire was to see something of the neighbouring hunt, and I have recollections of an Easter vacation spent in the Isle of Wight, when I had several days with the Isle of Wight Foxhounds; of a Christmas visit to Hastings, when for about a month I hunted with the East Sussex; and also of being in Penzance one Easter time, when I saw the Western in the field. The Isle of Wight hunting I remember little about, beyond the fact that I had a fall and came down in a bed of nettles, which was a most irritating experience. The East Sussex I saw—I think—in the last year of Mr. H. M. Curteis's mastership, and my recollections are chiefly of biggish woodlands and a great deal of timber jumping. I became familiar with the Sussex "heave" gate, which is to be found in this and adjoining countries, and I remember being knocked over at a fence by a groom on a runaway roan; but I cannot call to mind that I saw any hunt of exceptional merit, and there were fewer foxes than I was accustomed to see found with the northern packs I had hunted with. The Western country, at least that part which I saw, was very bleak and wild, and



all the jumping stone walls; but I thought everything about the hunt was suggestive of enthusiasm, and, in fact, that sport was the great desideratum of the whole establishment. There was none of that easy-going apparent indifference that was rather characteristic in some of the hunts of the 'sixties, no smartly turned-out "swells," as they were then called, no second horses that I can remember, but an all-round strict attention to business. I saw this Western pack twice, and enjoyed myself amazingly, and I have always been glad to notice at the beginning of each season that the country is still hunted by members of the Bolitho family.

After I left school I was for two whole hunting seasons at Malvern, and during that time I managed to get about seven days a fortnight, and saw many packs of hounds. The countries immediately surrounding Malvern were rather differently constituted to what they now are. There was no North Ledbury, no North Cotswold, and the boundaries of the Croome and Worcestershire were somewhat differently arranged. Indeed, the Croome country was then "Lord Coventry's," and the Worcestershire came quite close to Malvern, on the east side, hunting country, which now belongs to the Croome. The district I have in mind is the flat country between the Malvern hills and the river Severn and the country round Cotteridge. These belonged to the Worcestershire when I went to Malvern in 1870, and the late Lord Queensberry was Master of the pack, and then as great a daredevil on horseback as I ever saw. In the following season Mr. H. Allsopp was Master, and I saw one or two capital hunts on the east side of the Severn in the country north of Worcester. Fields with this pack were of fair size, and much of the country very good riding ground, and I formed the opinion that most of the country carried a good scent. There was a good deal of plough in some parts of the country, and I have been told that much of it has been laid down to grass; but it is fifty years since I saw hounds in Worcestershire. As it happened, I went much more frequently to the Ledbury than to the Worcestershire. It is all so long ago that I have only to trust to memory, but I imagine that the Ledbury had more near meets to Malvern than the Worcestershire or Lord Coventry's, and

there are hills in the Ledbury country, and I was accustomed to hills. Anyhow, though the country may be no better, the Ledbury suited me best, and I saw a lot of first-rate sport in it, for a short time under Mr. F. M. Talbot, but chiefly during Mr. Charles Morrell's mastership, and my first appearance with this pack was most unpropitious. I had hired a mare who looked like a hunter, but had probably never seen hounds before. She bucked, kicked, and reared, and after a time came down through losing her balance when rearing. Boys, however, are not very particular, and a gallop soon brought her to a more amicable state of mind. But she galloped into her fences, and gave me a lot of falls, until I gave her a proper jumping education, after which she became a useful mount. About this time I bought the first horse I ever owned—a black mare, very well bred, and said to have been by an Arab sire. I was a light weight then, and this mare carried me well, being a bold, free jumper, fairly fast, and a rare one to get through a really long day. I shall never forget the style in which she jumped a gate the first day I rode her. I fancy I had never been over a proper five-barred gate before, and I do not think I had any intention of jumping one; but hounds were hunting in Bosbury Wood, and the field were inside the covert when they went away. We all galloped down a ride, and the first man to reach the gate shouted out that it was locked, pulled his horse back, put him at it, and got over with a scramble. My mare pricked her ears, and showed signs of wanting to follow. So I let her go, and she got over quite clear. Whether anyone else came I do not remember, but we two were by ourselves for ten minutes, and then came a big orchard, and in those days I used to think the orchards were the only great nuisance of the Ledbury country, which is, I need hardly write, a great apple and pear growing district. On almost every farm there is an orchard, some of them very large, and nearly all of them close to the house and farm buildings. As far as my experience goes, there was, almost invariably, a large entrance gate to the orchard, close to the farm, but frequently no exit, except perhaps a very awkward stile. Why the obstruction, then? I may be asked, and the

answer is that in many cases the boughs of the fruit trees were trained along the top of the fence, leaving no place where jumping was practicable. I have occasionally found myself inside one of these orchards, with no road out, even for a bold-jumping horse, and after a time, if hounds crossed an orchard, I always went round, and this most certainly saved ground in the long run. The late Mr. Arkwright, of Hampton Court (Herefordshire), who was Master of the North Herefordshire at the time I am writing about, was the best man I ever saw at crossing those orchards. Probably he knew the country well, for if one followed him into an orchard, there was always a way out, though it might—and generally did—involve an awkward jump.

The Ledbury country always struck me as containing rich land, and much of it carried a rare scent. The best part of the country from a riding point of view was on the Gloucester side, where the Ledbury joins the Berkeley Hunt, and such meets as the Canning Arms were the most popular in my day. This part of the country contains a lot of grass, and is not so hilly as the country round Ledbury, and I have a recollection of a youngster mounted for the day by a friend jumping a pair of railway gates, and the owner of the horse selling him for a large sum immediately afterwards. The loan horse had pounded the field, and some time afterwards, when forces were joined up, the rider quietly confided to me that he had not had the least intention of jumping the gates, but had been run away with, and had just managed to keep his seat. At times on the north side of the Ledbury country the field fifty years ago would not exceed a couple of dozen, and my recollection is that fifty was quite a big number for the Ledbury district, while on the Gloucester side of the country there would be nearly double that number. I have in mind, too, that hounds only hunted about five days a fortnight, that the hunt establishment was a very small one, and that Mr. Morrell, who was his own huntsman, hunted hounds on the silent system, nothing being heard but an occasional whistle when a fox was viewed. In the Ledbury district there were several big woodlands, notably Eastnor; but there was not a strand of wire in the whole country when I was there, and I never saw or knew of a blank day. But I had some

terribly long rides to covert on the Gloucester side, and one extraordinary hunt, of which I have certain very vivid recollections. It was towards the end of January, and there had been a severe frost, the sort of frost which prompts Masters to advertise "The first open day at the kennels." This had been in the papers more than a week when the thaw began. But the frost went slowly, and I rode at least twice to the kennels before the Master thought it fit to hunt. Then there came a day of sunshine, and hounds were taken to a not very big woodland about twelve o'clock. There were only seven or eight riders all told, and hounds were quickly away with a fox, and ran to a gorse covert—Cowarne Gorse, if I remember rightly—in the North Herefordshire country. Here it was thought that we changed, but there was no delay, and hounds ran on hard to Stoke Edith in the South Herefordshire country. Here the Master tried to stop them, as it was getting late and hounds were a long way from home and the going dangerous. But it was one of those days of burning scent, and hounds would not be denied. In fact, they "got away on us," as they say in Ireland, and ran right to the river Wye, where they killed their fox quite close to Holme Lacy. This was a great hunt, and only the Master, the late Dr. Sheward, of Malvern Wells, and I were ever in it after the first quarter of an hour, and we all lasted to the end. The pace was fastest in the middle, and slowest in the last hour; but even then it was impossible on tired horses to get near enough to stop hounds, who were beating us all day. We did manage to keep them in sight, and at times were on good terms with them for quite a long period; but we lost them momentarily at Stoke Edith, and were put right out by some waggoners, who shouted like maniacs. What the exact point of this hunt was I have never been able to determine, because I am not sure where the hunt commenced. I have thought at times it was Bosbury Wood, but then, again, I have an idea that it was a smaller spinney quite close to Ledbury. Anyhow, it was one of the three or four greatest hunts I ever saw, and thirty years after Mr. Morrell told me that it was the longest hunt he was ever in during his mastership, either of the Ledbury, the Worcestershire, or the South Oxfordshire. Early in this hunt Mr. Morrell and I both came down through

the giving way of a little bank on to which we jumped. The fence was not a big one, but there was a deep ditch below, brimming over with water as a result of the thaw, and the ground beyond was rotten. I fell clear, but the Master's horse slipped back into the ditch, and on getting out stood and kicked. Mr. Morrell got up, when the horse kicked so violently that he got off, and I saw that something was wedged under the saddle behind. The saddle was removed, and quite a large piece of gorse that had been forced under it taken out. Then we went on, half a mile behind hounds; but the country was open, and we were able to catch them by cutting off a corner.

Though it has nothing to do with foxhunting, I may perhaps be allowed to refer to another branch of sport, at which I assisted during my sojourn at Malvern, and which was, in its way, quite unique. The sport in question was rat-catching, and some readers will remember that one of Surtees' best characters, Lord Scamperdale, was first entered to rat-catching with ferrets, as a prelude to his foxhunting education. In another place the same author writes of a huntsman having "a deal of rat-catching cunning," and as far as my experience goes the best amateur rat-catchers I ever met were foxhunters, and the cleverest of these a professional huntsman. It is the case that rats invariably haunt a foxhound kennel, being tempted by the flesh, and it results that hunt servants have the chance of plenty of this kind of sport. There was no huntsman concerned in the experience I am going to relate, but a most enthusiastic foxhunter, not much older than I was, but of very ripe experience in various forms of sport. In going to hunt or in coming home my friend had noticed a certain very desolate rickyard, and at the first opportunity we made an inspection of the place. The locality I need not specify exactly, but the farm was at no great distance from the river Severn, and the landlord, who lived elsewhere, was an eccentric, who, for some reason I never heard, had not had the stacks in this particular yard threshed for some years. The place was, as far as my recollection goes, quite away from any farm-house and village; if there were buildings near the rickyard there was no one living in them; but several acres were covered with stacks, all in a state of



dilapidation. The oldest of the lot were sunken masses of blackened straw, and had long been left by the rats; the newer ones were still fairly respectable, but what may be called the intervening lot—probably from two to four years old—were literally riddled with rats, and as we sat on horseback, looking at them, rats were running about the yards by dozens. We heard, probably from someone living not far from this curious place, that the owner objected to “trespass in pursuit of rats” almost as much as he did to having his stacks threshed; but we were not going to give up the idea of what appeared to offer a most promising chance of rat-hunting, and my friend, after a great deal of trouble, obtained the necessary leave. Shortly afterwards there was a severe frost, and many days were spent on the lake at Eastnor Castle, for it was not an easy business to organise such a hunt as we had in contemplation, while we were both living in rooms—lodgings they were then called—at Malvern, and had no ferrets, and only one really trustworthy terrier, a Scottie, by name Francis, and on whom my friend (his owner) set great store.

Further inquiries were made, and these resulted in our getting into touch with a curious ancient who lived on the Ledbury side of the country. This man was a rabbit-catcher by profession, and had been an under gamekeeper, and, though about seventy years old, was both active and keen. He engaged to be at Malvern early one morning with ferrets and terriers, and there we loaded up on a dogcart, sitting ourselves in front, and well do I remember that the hireling we drove was terribly slow, and the drive in the severe frost one of the coldest I ever remember. And the day was a failure, too; the five or six ferrets we had brought with us would not face the huge number of rats in the most thickly populated stacks, and the terriers we had borrowed were not very good. We tried stack after stack, but the ferrets kept coming out as fast as we shoved them in, and the climax came when, in swiping at a rat, I hit Francis on the side of his head (he had come from behind me) and knocked him out. Luckily he was not much worse, and soon came round; but his owner was terribly distressed, for Francis was a dog who refused friendship—even acquaintanceship—with anyone but his real master, and was a wonder at rats. By this time we

decided that our tactics were of little use, for our presence kept the rats inside, and the ferrets could not turn them out. Somewhat sorrowfully we departed, with a bag of something under fifty rats; but we had found out how success might be achieved, and a certain day, about a week later, was fixed for a second attempt. The idea now was to bring a whole army of ferrets and shake them out on the top of one of the liveliest stacks, and our ancient—I think his name was Grimes—undertook to obtain over a score of ferrets within the next few days. Luckily, the old man was as good as his word, for he appeared on the appointed day with a sack full of borrowed ferrets, and various other cherished ones in ferret bags and in his pockets. The frost had gone, and the weather was genial, and I think, though I am not quite sure, that we had another man with a better lot of terriers. Anyhow, the sport was vastly better. A certain stack was first chosen, and someone climbed to the top, which was not very high, and shook out the main body of the ferrets from a sack. Then for a few minutes there was an extraordinary scene, for after a minute or two the rats began to bolt, literally by the dozen. In fact, they came far too fast, and in too many places, hundreds escaping the terriers and sticks. Still, a fair number were killed, the ferrets this time having all the best of the fighting. After this stack was finished we went to another, and continued operations until both ferrets and terriers were “done,” and when we counted up we had, as far as my memory goes, some 300 dead rats laid out on the ground. It was, in fact, a great day’s sport, and, I feel certain, a most unusual one.

To go back to foxhunting, I have had a long letter from Mr. Baron Webster, who puts me right on the subject of how the country was hunted forty-five years ago on the east side of Malvern. Mr. Webster says that at the date referred to the North Cotswold did exist, but was known as Lord Coventry’s, the country then hunted by that nobleman, and resigned by him to Mr. Rushout in 1873, having no connection with the present Croome, that was known as “Lord Coventry’s” from 1873 until his lordship’s retirement in 1882. What I said was that the Croome country was then Lord Coventry’s, and, according to *Baily’s Hunting Directory*,

“ Lord Coventry founded the hunt (the Croome) in the year 1887.” That it (the Croome) was practically the same hunt as the North Cotswold at the date I was writing about I did not state; but I said that the Worcestershire came quite close to Malvern on the east side “ between the Malvern hills and the River Severn.” This Mr. Webster confirms, saying: “ The Worcestershire hunted all the country now covered by that pack and the Croome,” and the boundary between the Worcestershire and Ledbury, so far as Great Malvern is concerned, was, I take it, the Worcester road, in which stands the Belle Vue Hotel, where the Ledbury used to meet once a year.” He then goes on to state that Lord Coventry brought his hounds to Croome in 1873 under an arrangement with the Worcestershire, which in time became permanent. Mr. Webster then explains how the North Ledbury is a modern institution, subsidiary, he believes, to the present pack, the country still existing as a whole. This is generally understood, and I did not allude to it, but merely said there was no North Ledbury. Mr. Webster adds that the institution of the North Ledbury shows very clearly the enormous increase in the popularity of foxhunting, and this particular case I have frequently referred to in other writings, when attempting to show how greatly foxhunting increased between my earliest days and the period before the war. The letter then goes on to state that, whereas the Ledbury country was hunted three days a week—not two, as I stated—in 1870, the two packs between them at times have done eight days a week, while Mr. Browne, of Hall Court, had his pack on the borders, hunting country loaned from other hunts. Mr. Webster goes further into the early history of the hunt, but I have not space to give his letter in full, and may pass on to his remark that “ when Mr. Talbot retired in 1871 the country was at a very low ebb, but Mr. Morrell came on the scene at a critical moment, and was a glorious success.” It was this success, or at least a part of it, that I was lucky enough to come in for, for I remember that the sport shown was uniformly good whilst I was in that neighbourhood. Mr. Webster does not remember Mr. Morrell hunting hounds on the silent system, and says he took his hounds to a holloa. But as far as I remember he and his men had whistles—for a time at all

events—and there was far less holloaing and noise than there is with other packs. One would like to hear what any other veteran of the Ledbury country remembers in this connection, for it is an interesting point. In conclusion, Mr. Webster says a good word for Malvern as a hunting centre, and I am in very cordial agreement with him as to this. It was good enough with many hunting days in the week when I knew it, and it is better now, with a new pack in existence and more days among the old packs.

Mr. Twinberrow, Master of the North Ledbury, writes as to the actual facts with regard to the North Ledbury country. He says that the country in question has now nothing whatever to do with the Ledbury, that he built the kennels at his own expense on his own property, and that the hounds—all of them home bred—are his own property. Mr. Twinberrow, in fact, hunts the North Ledbury country very much at his own expense, for the outside subscription is a small one, which will only pay a very small part of the cost of maintenance. Some half-dozen seasons ago Mr. Twinberrow killed twenty-four and a half brace of foxes, and this for a two days a week pack—with occasional bye-days—is wonderfully good for any country, and it means that when the North Ledbury was a part of the Ledbury proper, hounds only went there once a week and seldom killed more than four or five brace during the season in that particular district, whereas they now kill about five times the number. Mr. Twinberrow went out with Mr. Charles Morrell when a lad, and has no recollection of whistles being used by the staff. Mr. Twinberrow also confirms the statement that Malvern was at one time a popular hunting centre, but of late years very few people have hunted from there, though a meet anywhere near always brings out a lot of very keen people on foot. He further remarks that there has always been a lot of holloaing about the hills round Malvern when hounds were running, but that half the pleasure of a man on foot is to view a fox and holloa him. This I can very thoroughly confirm, and I may add that in recent years the number of foot foxhunters has enormously increased all over the country. In some districts, especially in a hilly country, where many coigns of vantage can be found, the number of regular pedestrian foxhunters

is very considerable, and when hounds meet near a town, or a large village, the number is greatly increased. Personally, I know of individuals who walk long distances to far-away meets, and follow hounds as best they can throughout the day, and when hunting near a mining population I have seen the hilltops literally black with people during the early part of the day. The Pytchley, when near Northampton, always attracts a crowd, as does the Atherstone when meeting near Nuneaton. The fact is, that in scores of country districts foxhunting on foot is an exceedingly popular form of relaxation, and by no means confined to the sterner sex, for—especially since the short skirt came in—many ladies also follow hounds on foot. I am writing of pre-war days, but even since the war certain people in the country take their relaxation when following hounds on foot, and hospital nurses, and war workers of many varieties, were seen at the covert-side during the four years of hostilities. Of regular foot followers, the greatest dearth I have ever known was in Essex some twenty years ago. One might notice a few people on foot at a meet, but I do not remember any regular followers, and I have seen fox, hounds, and field pass farm labourers at work without causing them even to turn their heads. The Malvern hills are a grand vantage ground for the pedestrian foxhunter; but if there is a scent, the North Ledbury, so I understand, are not in the least disturbed by holloas, and do not leave the fox they are running. I was almost omitting to mention that Mr. Twinberrow has “spotted” the place where the rat hunt (described a page or two back) took place, but it is hardly worth while to give the name of the farm.

Another letter, from Mr. W. Pitt, of the White House, Canon Frome, refers to the great run with the Ledbury which I have mentioned. Mr. Pitt writes that he remembers that run as though it were yesterday, and has often told the story of it. He begins that “he was only a young chap riding a rough cob, and did not push on much, therefore would not have been noticed.” He then says that hounds found at Paunceford, a 20-acre covert, near the Great Western Railway, and about two miles from the kennels. In my account I said that I was unable to determine where the hunt began, that I thought it was either as Bosbury Wood



or at a smaller spinney near Ledbury. Mr. Pitt goes on to say that hounds ran by Canon Frome, Stretton, and to Cowarne Gorse (this place I mentioned), then turned left of Cowarne Big Wood, and by Ocle Court to Westhide Gorse, and over a nice vale country to Stoke Edith. He then mentions a long string of woodlands, and observes that he always thought they changed foxes at Stoke Edith. As well as I recollect, Mr. Morrell thought so, too; but some men in charge of wood waggons—to whom I referred in my account of the run—had seen the fox we were then hunting close at hand, and from what they said the fox they saw was black and dirty. Mr. Pitt says hounds then went through Haughwood (1,000 acres), and this woodland I remember, also that I thought it a part of the Stoke Edith coverts. We next crossed Fownhope Park, and here Mr. Pitt remembers watching hounds feather the line down to the river Wye. He infers that hounds crossed the river hereabouts, and says we had to go a quarter of a mile to the right to cross at Holme Lacy bridge, and that hounds killed their fox at Holme Lacy. I had, therefore, the three chief points of the run—viz., Cowarne, Stoke Edith, and Holme Lacy—correct, and I know I am correct in saying that the pace was fastest in the middle of the hunt—between Cowarne and Stoke Edith—and slowest from the last-named place to the river. Anyhow, it was a great hunt, and even now I cannot give the point, for Pauceford is not to be found in my map of Herefordshire.

Mr. Pitt follows on with some account of the veterans of the Ledbury who were hunting when I was at Malvern, mentioning Dr. Sheward and his two old mares, one lop-eared and the other “a grey stargazer that was fed on old white peas.” They were a wonderful trio, the Doctor and these two mares. Both the latter were almost, if not quite, thoroughbred, and the Doctor certainly was, while he was such a light weight that his mares had very little to carry. “Old John Newman,” of the Hill Farm, Cradley, who died some eight or ten years ago at the age of ninety-two, is also referred to, and Messrs. Wynnall, of Dymock, Dr. Wood, Dr. Tanner, and others. Mr. Pitt having lived all his life in the Ledbury country, of course, knows it well, and he sends me an amusing account of a hunt breakfast which took place at

Mr. Morrell's house, and which was followed by a foot race between two members of the hunt. He asks if I remember this, and I certainly do remember the talk and chaff about the match—which was for £10—but I was not present. Curiously enough, I did once see a foot race between a Master of hounds and his huntsman, at the end of a day's hunting in spring. And, more curiously, I was on my way home from hunting with another pack, who had finished a fair run with a kill barely a couple of miles from where this race took place. Several of us were coming home together, and as we came down a steep hill there was an old-fashioned country inn, at the cross-roads immediately below us. In the field alongside there appeared to be an unusual stir for such a quiet place, and we found that the Master and huntsman of the neighbouring pack had had a difference of opinion as to which could beat the other on foot. They had, it appeared, raced half-way across a heavy ploughed field for a fox (outside a wood, from which there was no egress when it was wanted, and where they had left their horses) some time before, and ever since the question as to which of the two was quickest on his legs had been disputed. The flat field at the country inn gave them a nice trial ground, and we arrived just as the huntsman had beaten his Master over a fifty yards course.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### LONG POINTS AND THE HEYTHROP.

It is perhaps a little curious in these days, when hunting is almost everywhere conducted on strictly orthodox lines, that such things as foot races could be in any way associated with a day's foxhunting, but in out-of-the-way, or perhaps I should say unfashionable, countries people were not so strict nearly two generations ago as they are now, and I also remember one hunt finishing a two-hours' run in the gardens of a large country house about 1.30, that the owner of the house came out and invited all who were there to lunch, that the horses were stabled, and hounds put into a loose box, and that something like an hour was spent in festivity before horse and hound were again requisitioned.

The question of long "points" is one which crops up from time to time, and, writing from my own experience, I am inclined to believe that there were, on the whole, more long points in very early hunting days than there now are. Still, I am not quite so sure of this as I was a few years ago, for the simple reason that during the four or five seasons immediately preceding the war I saw a very considerable number of fair hunts, the points of which were almost, but not quite, as good as two or three I can remember which took place in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies. In an article which appeared in the *Field*, when hunting was stopped by frost, in January, 1905, and in two or three subsequent numbers the question was discussed at some length, and the opinion was put forth that in many accounts of hunting runs there was over-estimation of the actual point, due to the fact that the distance of the point was arrived at by guesswork on the part of someone who knew the country well, but had not measured the distance on the ordnance map. The map

is the only absolutely trustworthy guide, and should always be consulted if there is any doubt, and my experience is that the map very often reduces what has been at first thought to be a ten-mile point to a point of about seven, and so forth; and also it proves that it is of little use to reckon the actual point of any run by the supposed distance between any two places, for country roads wind almost everywhere, and such distances are locally estimated by the length of the road. The article to which reference has been made, and of which I was the writer, need not be quoted at length, but it suggested that when hounds were not so fast as they now are, and fields were of smaller size, the percentage of good days was higher all round, and that if hounds did not travel as fast as they now do on a burning scent, they ran more uniformly on moderate scenting days, and finished their runs either by killing or marking to ground more frequently than they now do. This statement I made after having seen hounds, several times and in more than one country, taken to draw a fresh covert, while they still had a hunted fox in front of them, but were only able to speak to the line very occasionally, and had been reduced to what is generally spoken of as walking after their fox. I referred to the fact that I had to go back to my earliest days for the best and longest hunts I had ever seen, and I gave very brief particulars of three. The first of these was from Ingoe to Meldon Dyke Nook with the Tynedale in 1867 (and has been mentioned in this volume), the second was the hunt from Paunceford to Holme Lacy with the Ledbury in January, 1872, and which has been described, and the third was with the Heythrop in December of the same year (1872). Concerning this last run, of which I gave the barest particulars in the article referred to, the late Mr. Melliar Foster-Melliar, of North Aston Hall, for many years secretary of the Heythrop Hunt, sent the following letter to the *Field*, which appeared on February 4th, 1905:—

“ OLD HUNTING DAYS.

“ SIR,—I was much interested in ‘ Shotley’s ’ article ‘ Then and Now ’ in the last *Field*, specially in its allusion to a fine run with the Heythrop in 1872, at which I was present, and will, with your permission, give you a fuller account of it drawn from my diary:—

“ ‘ 1872 was the last year of Mr. Hall’s mastership, he taking the hounds in 1865. The pack belonged to the late Lord Redesdale, and Mr. Hall engaged Stephen Goodall as huntsman, whilst he hunted a pack of bitches, which he had bought. This arrangement gave us the finest seven years’ sport I ever saw with the Heythrop, and the run I am about to describe I have always considered the best in every point (but one) I have ever seen in forty-four years’ hunting. On December 16th, 1872, the Heythrop met here (North Aston). The weather was fine and open, but we made a bad start, chopping one fox and running another to ground without any run. Then we drew a little osier bed close to Clifton Mill, on the bank of the Cherwell (our boundary). It was apparently blank, but when we were two fields beyond it there was a holloa, so we galloped back, and were told by a member of the hunt, who was a little late, that he had seen a fox go away. I held up my hat to Hall, who came back, and laid on the hounds quite quietly, when they settled at once, and this great run began. The fox made first to Deddington, then, leaving that on his right, went up the Duns Tew Vale to Hauk Hill; passed that on his left, and, having Newington on his right and Wiggington on his left, went on up to Wiggington Heath. Passed that on his left, to Tadmarton, Swallowcliffe Park, and Sibford. Here, close to Sibford Rough, we lost, owing to the fox being chased by a sheepdog on Sibford Grounds Farm—nine miles from point to point, and twelve as we ran; time, two hours and thirty minutes.’

“ So you see it was not fast, but a grand, straight, hunting run. I do not remember any particular check, but we kept going on at a fair hunting pace. I think I was the only one who got a second horse at Wiggington Heath. I had my two best ones—a white at first, and finished on a black. ‘ Shotley ’ and Hermon-Hodge must have had a terrible ride to Oxford, more than twenty miles, and a pitch-dark night. I have often wondered how and when they got home. It was hard lines to be proctorised at the end! The last field but



one was grass, and the bitches streamed up under the hedge, then turned through it into a stubble, which was mown and full of haulm cocks, in the middle of which we threw up. In one corner was a sheepfold and shepherd making all snug for the night. We asked him, but he was sullen and nasty; and my impression is that someone jumped off his horse in a rage and offered to fight him; but we worked it down, and the two undergraduates went off in what they thought was the way to Oxford. Then the whipper-in (poor Jack Hazelton) came up and begged Hall to send him home with the hounds, as they were curling up in twos and threes to sleep on the haulm cocks. Whilst they were being got together I asked the shepherd quietly (after half-a-crown) whether his dog had run him. 'Yes, he did.' That was enough for me; for, of course, our fox was so beat the dog must have killed him. Well, if we had only caught him it would have been perfect.

MELLIAR FOSTER-MELLIAR."

My recollections of the hunt which Mr. Foster-Melliar described are very vivid, firstly because I was on a horse which I had been told would not jump water, and there was a biggish brook in the line almost immediately after the start. The horse jumped it in fine style, but shortly afterwards he gave me a terrible ducking in the old Berks Country by falling into a deep, sullen water cut, not far from Abingdon race-course. In the Heythrop run he had jumped the water like a stag, but with the Old Berks he refused and then slipped in, and I went right under before I got clear of him. But that North Aston day will always live in my memory, for the line was good all the way, and barbed wire had not been invented in those days. As far as I am concerned, trouble only arose when the run was over, and the difficulty of getting back to Oxford was encountered. We had a dogcart and tandem at Hopcrofts Holt, but that place was about fifteen miles from where we finished, and it was dark almost immediately, while neither Hermon-Hodge nor I had even been in that part of the country before. Moreover, our horses were done to a turn, and quite an hour was lost in our attempts to obtain meal and water at the first hamlet we reached. We

had to lead for a great part of the distance, and when we reached the tandem our troubles were not over, for the leader was in the lead for the first time that day, and would not go in the dark. I think we stopped and changed the positions of the two horses, but anyhow we had a most curious drive, and did not reach Oxford until nearly eleven o'clock, having had no dinner *en route*. What Mr. Foster-Melliar wrote about the sport shown by the Heythrop I can confirm as far as the season of 1872 is concerned. They were then showing better sport than any of the packs near Oxford, and this was reflected in the size of the fields. Fields were of fair size with the Bicester, too, in those days, but the Heythrop attracted the undergraduate who knew what hunting was, and the trouble of it was that many of the best meets were at a great distance from Oxford, and only to be reached after a very long ride or drive. The Gawcombe Vale, for example, must be twenty miles at least from Alma Mater, but it is a rare country when reached, and was well worth the long journey. I saw a very fine hunt from Bradwell Grove, which, if my memory is correct, ended near Wychwood Forest. I have also a recollection of a queer drive home to Oxford a few days before Christmas of 1872. Hounds had met somewhere in the Whitney district, and I drove to the meet with a friend, our horses being brought from Woodstock. The groom took the trap on to Whitney to await our arrival after hunting, and I do not think there was any particular run of note, but I do remember that it was bitterly cold, with heavy showers of sleety snow during the day. We were, however, very busy during the afternoon, and I stayed until hounds went home, could not find my friend, and trotted off to Whitney, arriving wet to the skin after dark. I then found that my friend had returned hours before, and had gone home by train, and so I started alone, behind two very free-going horses, who had been standing five or six hours in the stable and were terribly keen to get home. It was now freezing hard and the road was quickly becoming a sheet of ice. It was very dark also, and it was Saturday night, which at that time meant market day at Oxford. My gloves were so wet that the reins slipped through my fingers, and how I accomplished my journey without an accident I have never

quite understood, for between Eynsham and Oxford there were then—and may be still for all I know—trees alongside the road for a considerable distance, and quite half the many market carts I met were on the wrong side of the road, especially in this dark district. Very few of the carters carried lights—I imagine they were not obliged to by law at that date—and many of the passengers appeared to be “market merry,” but luckily one could hear them talking and singing long before they could be actually seen. Another funny getting home from the Heythrop I have in mind. It was also a tandem case, and as our tandem reached a certain turnpike gate some four or five miles from Oxford, we were greeted with a loud shout of “Stop!” We pulled up, and found a closed cab waiting, which had been sent by James Higgs, livery stable-keeper, of Long Wall, to meet us, Higgs having discovered that the proctors were lying in wait for the tandem nearer Oxford. Well, we were just about getting into the cab when a four-in-hand drag appeared from the same direction by which we had come. This drag was, I think, owned by certain Guards officers, who used to hunt from Bicester at that time. Anyhow, it was lightly laden, and when the man who was driving had been told what all the fuss was about, he had a happy thought, which was that two of his party should go on in the tandem, while our tandem load went into Oxford on the coach. The coach, which was known to the proctors, went in unchallenged, but the dogcart was pulled up, and the proctors thoroughly sold.

Further recollections of the Heythrop include an opening meet at Heythrop House whilst it was being restored, and when a huge crowd were entertained in a large marquee placed on the lawn; of a very fine hunt in the centre of the country, and of good sport from Bradwell Grove and a covert near Bruern Abbey, the name of which I do not remember. I also have a queer recollection of an incident which took place in Tar Wood in the autumn of 1872, and before the regular season had commenced. Hounds were, in fact, cubhunting, and were having a lot of covert work with cubs which showed no inclination of leaving the shelter of the wood. There were a lot of people out, for the regular season was close at hand, and after a good deal of galloping

up and down the rides people became collected in groups generally where there was a cross-ride. Perhaps a dozen riders were in one particular spot, when someone shouted "Look-out!" and a runaway horse was seen coming right at us at a high rate of speed. There was a general pulling to one side, and as the horse approached the group he began to stop of his own accord, for his rider did not appear to have the least control over him. But in stopping he collided with a tree and his rider came off, being thrown on to his back almost in the centre of the ride. Quite a usual thing, you will say, and so it was; but the joke (if any) was forthcoming in the fact that the fallen horseman wore a blue pea-jacket—greatly worn at that day, but not in the hunting field—and a pair of wide blue trousers. These were rucked up and torn, and, as their owner recovered his wind, it was seen by everyone that he had underneath the blue trousers well-made and smart top boots, and leathers above. He soon came round, and was the victim of a good deal of chaff, and he was quickly recognised as a somewhat eccentric young Don, who was afterwards a first-rate sportsman, but was then going through his novitiate. Why he covered up his new boots and breeches I never heard; but, *à propos* curious costumes, I remember being out with the Ledbury at some incredibly early hour at the end of August, and the sudden appearance of a youngish man in new scarlet, white breeches, top boots, and tall hat, as if it had been the regular season. Who he was I have quite forgotten, and I would not reveal his name even if I remembered it; but he made a striking apparition, and the Master (Mr. Charles Morrell) was the most astonished man in the world when he saw it. Mr. Morrell was not far away, inside a covert, hunting hounds, and, seeing the scarlet, he naturally thought it was one of his own men in the wrong place, and shouted out some order. To this there was no response, and it was not until the Master obtained a full view of the magnificent cubhunter that he realised he had been shouting in vain.

I remember in that same season of 1872 being at the opening meet of the Bicester, just after Lord Valentia had taken the mastership, and I was also in the same season at the opening meet of the Old Berks, of

which Lord Craven and Mr. "Tom" Duffield were then joint Masters. Where this was held I cannot remember, but I have a recollection of a breakfast in a long room—possibly a barn—converted into a dining-room for the purpose, and I think the meet was either at the kennels or at some farmhouse close by. The Bicester was a very smart hunt in those days, and I think there were more scarlet coats, in proportion to the numbers out, than in any other hunt I have seen. Bunches of violets and other buttonholes were common, as were snaffle bridle thoroughbred horses; but the best of the country was a long way from Oxford, and I was not very lucky as regards sport in my visits. With the Old Berks I saw several good days; but there again the Oxford side of the country contains—or did then—a lot of plough land, and is nothing like so good as the Berkshire Vale further south, and to which I only once penetrated. Lord Craven and Mr. Duffield were an enthusiastic couple of foxhunters, and the whole field struck me as being terribly keen and businesslike. The South Oxfordshire are perhaps more frequently close to Oxford than any other pack, and at the time I write of the late Lord Macclesfield was Master, and my chief recollections of the hunt are of biggish woodlands and very consistent sport. About this time I had odd days with the Warwickshire and the V.W.H., the latter then one country, with Sir W. Throckmorton Master, and I also saw the Duke of Beaufort's hounds on the north side of their country, close to the V.W.H. boundary. During the late 'seventies and early 'eighties all the hunting I saw was in Durham, Northumberland, and Yorkshire and this I have already described; but in the late 'eighties I had a good deal of wandering up and down the country and saw many packs at work. From Lichfield, where I stayed with the late "Squire" Treadwell at Bury Hills, I saw the South Staffordshire and Meynell, and a year or two later I saw the North Staffordshire, hunting, and in the kennel, whilst staying with a friend at Eccleshall. About this time, too, I had sundry short expeditions to the Midland packs, and I remember taking part in one very fine hunt with the Quorn, of which I wrote an account for *Land and Water*. But I have mislaid the cutting and cannot be sure of the date. It took place, however, on a Monday, and the



meet was at Lodge-on-the-Wolds. Hunting had been stopped by a not very severe frost during the latter half of the previous week, and the result was that there was a far larger field than was then usual at this particular meet. I remember being penned up with the crowd, like sheep, in a lane, during the morning, and seeing very little; but after two o'clock, when about two-thirds of the field had departed, hounds got away on good terms with a fox, and ran for about an hour and ten minutes, making a point of five or six miles, and finishing with a kill—I think just on the Belvoir boundary. I was with Mr. Fernie one day when they ran twice from the neighbourhood of Glenn to the Leicester racecourse at Oadby, and after a Sleaford coursing meeting I had a rattling good day with the Belvoir in their Lincolnshire country, on a horse kindly lent to me by the late Mr. F. Ward, of Quarrington.

About this time, too, I had days with the Queen's, the Old Berkeley, Old Surrey, Surrey Union, and quite a number of Saturdays with the Garth, always on the Virginia Water, Chobham to Chertsey side of the country. In 1895 I went to the Burstow one early November day, and was so pleased with what I saw that I repeated the visit some thirty or forty times that season; but the pack did not court publicity in those days, and though I was connected with a hunting paper, my accounts of the doings of the Burstow were few and far between. On the day of my first visit hounds met at Godstone station, and it was blowing such a gale that hunting seemed out of the question, and covert after covert had been drawn blank before someone viewed a fox, hounds being quickly after him. He could not face the wind, and the upshot was that hounds ran down wind for forty minutes and killed in the open. On such a day this was a very big performance, and I know that I was a good deal impressed with it. The late Mr. Henry G. Hoare was then in his last year of mastership, and though foxes were very scarce all over the best part of the country, hounds showed a lot of sport whenever they had the opportunity. The great days of the season came in the spring, and it will be remembered not only for the sport shown, but because it was the last day on which Mr. Hoare rode to hounds. This day has been described in

the *Complete Foxhunter*, and there is also an account of it in the sporting section of the Surrey volumes of the *Victoria County Histories of England*, and I first of all may state, for the benefit of those who do not know the country, that the original Burstow country—the Hunt is now amalgamated with the Old Surrey—contains a very fine vale country, which lies between two lines of hills. The long line of hills which begins with the Hog's Back in the extreme west of Surrey extends eastward by Guildford, Dorking, and right on into Kent, and a spur of this line farther south forms Leith Hill, which is in the Surrey Union country. But immediately south of Reigate, Redhill, Bletchingley, and Limpsfield there is a wide and fairly flat plain—in which the Lingfield and Gatwick racecourses are situated—and this plain must be about ten miles from north to south, where it reaches a low range of hills on the Surrey-Sussex border, and perhaps a little further from east to west. On the day I have in mind, hounds met at the village of Lingfield, and there had been so much rain shortly before that the racecourse stream was flooded, and as the first draw was the clump on the racecourse, White—who had come from the Goodwood to carry the horn with the Burstow in place of Mr. Hoare—had to cross the stream on a plank, hounds having been brought to the racecourse from the far side, and not by the usual road. There was an immediate holloa, and hounds went back over the brook, and for several minutes had matters all to themselves, the field being held up by wire. This enabled the pack to settle to their fox, and they ran—without a check, as far as my recollection goes—across the plain to Gatwick, crossing the main Brighton line at the Gatwick racecourse station. I remember that railwaymen opened the gates, and we rode through the paddock to the head—the top turn—of the course, turned left-handed, and ran on to the outskirts of Crawley, where the fox was killed in a cottage garden. This was a capital hunt, with a point of about seven miles, and it was all over by one o'clock. Then came a long trot back to the country of the draw, and it was about three o'clock when a second fox was found in a spinney near New Chapel Green. Many of the field had gone home, and I remember Mr. Hoare coming out of the spinney and telling some of us that they were running two foxes

inside, but that he felt tired and was going home. Soon afterwards hounds went out on the east side and ran by the then much-talked-of Bellagio estate to Hammerwood, and thence to Cowden in the West Kent country. By this time the select few who were left with hounds were all in unknown country, and from that day to this I have never known exactly where we went; but hounds ran on, and when it was almost quite dark killed their fox in a hedgerow. Some seven or eight of the field, and White, the huntsman, were there, and after various wanderings in the dark we reached East Grinstead shortly before eight o'clock, left our horses there, and went home by train. Hounds arrived at the kennels about ten o'clock, and I have often thought this was about the best scenting day I ever remember. Nor can I recall any other day on which two such fine runs came so quickly, or one on which more ground was covered. What the point of the last run was I have never known, because it is impossible to say where it ended, but hounds were going on for well over two hours with no check of any consequence, and all the latter part of the hunt was in the West Kent or the Eridge country.

I may add that some years after these hunts had taken place I was told by the late Mr. "Bob" Fowler, of Lingfield, that the first fox, from the Lingfield racecourse, was a bagman, who had been put down only a few minutes before the hounds came. He was, however, a local fox, freshly caught, and not what used to be called a "Leadenhaller," and he was the most satisfactory bagman that I ever saw hunted.

Hunting from London had greatly declined in the ten or twenty years before the war, and by this I mean hunting on the part of men and women who lived in town and kept their horses in the country, going down by train on the hunting mornings and returning to London after the sport of the day was at an end. The fact is that though quite a score of south-country hunts depend in a great degree upon the London hunting people, a very large majority of the business men who hunt have long since become residents in the hunt of their choice, and really hunt from home, going to their businesses in town on the non-hunting days. And among the crowds in some of these hunts men from every rank of society were to be found not many years ago. Bankers, stock-

brokers, City merchants, barristers, lawyers, doctors, dentists, and, in fact, professional men of all sorts, with a big sprinkling of tradesmen, not only from the West End, but from the City and occasionally from the suburbs. The squirearchy within reach of town has been so greatly replaced by the business magnate of every variety that the old-fashioned land-owning hunting man was not very numerous when I hunted from London, and the more rustic part of the fields was chiefly composed of farmers, or of the sons of business men who preferred farming and rural life generally to following in their fathers' City footsteps. As for boxing horses from London on a hunting morning, the practice had practically disappeared at least five-and-twenty years ago. In the mid-Victorian period there was a good deal of boxing to the "Queen's," but things had changed greatly with the royal pack in the last few years of its existence, and, as happens in every other hunt, a majority of the boxing had become local. There were, say, five-and-twenty years ago, not many suitable morning trains from London to hunting centres, by which horses could be taken, and there was often a long delay after hunting before the horse could be taken back. The upshot was that those who hunted from town themselves kept their horses in the country, and had them sent on to meets, the rider usually availing himself of a station fly. When I used to see the Burstow I had an occasional companion—who now holds high military rank and has won the D.S.O.—but on three days out of four I left my London quarters long before daylight, and therefore was more than once deceived by the weather, there being rain in town while in the country there was snow. Still, I do not remember being stopped by weather for more than an hour or two in that country, for the winter was singularly open and mild, and the Burstow "crowd" was such a cheery one, and so optimistic, that an hour of delay meant that the time never hung heavily. Indeed, although it is more than twenty years ago, I have never forgotten the *bonhomie* and good feeling in this particular hunt. The stranger was quickly approached and given every chance of making acquaintances, and after a day or two, when members of the hunt found I was coming from London, invitations to breakfast on hunting mornings, or to "dine and sleep" before

hunting were really numerous. My idea was to breakfast at a certain hotel, and I went there once, and only once; the hotel was very good, but my new friends were so hospitable that there was no need to go there again. And although many of the regular habitués were not countrymen, but rather Londoners living in the country, I have never known so well-behaved a field. Over-riding was literally unknown, and no one ever dreamt of riding over growing crops. Over-riding—sometimes of a very bad character—I have seen in every hunt I have been in except the Burstow, and I always attributed some portion of the good sport I saw with this pack to the fact that hounds always had plenty of room, and were never hustled beyond their noses.

The Queen's I saw occasionally about seven-and-twenty years ago, and about the same time the Old Berkeley and the Garth, and this reminds me that a correspondent has asked me how near to London I have actually seen a fox hunted. I imagine that there are hundreds who have hunted regularly with some of the packs I have lately mentioned who could answer this question better than I can, for I have only hunted a little, at odd times, with the packs which are nearest to London. However, I may state that I have seen the Surrey Union run over the Epsom racecourse at the conclusion of a very fair hunt. The fox was found somewhere near Boxhill, but I do not remember the name of the covert, and hounds hunted at no great pace, and with a number of twists and turns to the neighbourhood of Woodcote Park, and then rather faster by the Warren, reaching the course at the City and Suburban starting post. They then cut across to Tattenham Corner and went into Nork Park, where I think the fox found shelter in a drain, but I am not quite sure as to what the exact finish was. The hunt took place shortly after Mr. F. G. Colman assumed the Mastership. I suppose Nork Park is sixteen miles from town by road, and I saw the same pack quite as near town a year or two later when they hunted a fox out of Princes' Woods to Barwell Court, which is adjacent to Claygate, and less than three miles from Surbiton. I remember to have heard of the same pack being at Worcester Park a few years earlier, but I never saw them there, though I have seen beagles all over the district in question and in the country—now almost entirely



built over—between Malden station and Coombe, and, in fact, over the ground which is now taken up by the two Coombe golf clubs. I have also seen the Old Berkeley (West) running all round Denham and to within a mile of Uxbridge, and I have seen the Old Berkeley (probably East) near the railway about half-way between Harrow and Watford, but that was from a train window. I have also seen the West Surrey Staghounds twice run a stag to Surbiton station, and on each occasion take it in the goods yard. The first hunt was from Slyfield—where many point-to-points have been run—and the stag at first went south nearly to Effingham. Then he turned, crossed the Mole a mile west of Leatherhead, and went on to Oxshott, where hounds got up to him and were called off. He then ran through the coverts north of Oxshott, passed east of Claygate, and went on to Surbiton. The other hunt was after a meet not far from Guildford, but the stag—the same in either case—came right back to Surbiton. These hunts took place during Mr. Martin Rucker's Mastership, probably in 1896 or the following year.

How near to London some of the Essex packs may come I hardly know, but I imagine that the Essex, Essex Union, and Mr. Bosanquet's (in Herts) may at times come even nearer than Surbiton. The Essex Union I first saw as long ago as during Mr. Scratton's third Mastership, which terminated in 1869. I was only a boy at the time, and was staying at the Royal Hotel at Southend, recovering from measles. Another boy of sporting taste was with me, and as it was midwinter and the place—then quite a small town—deserted, we had a lot of sport. We secured hirelings and had several days with Mr. Scratton, and both of us one day got into a deep drain on the marshes somewhere, I am inclined to think, in the neighbourhood of Southminster. When we were not hunting we went wild-fowl shooting in a little centre-board cutter manned by a brace of fishermen named Sol Ipsey and Tom Plumb—I have always remembered these rather unusual names—and they were both experts in the coast shooting of that day and put us in the way of securing a fair number of duck and other wild-fowl. We used to go round the coast to the Crouch river, if the wind suited, and up the Thames estuary if it was blowing too hard outside. We had

a duck-gun of the old-fashioned sort on a swivel and ordinary breech-loaders as well, and we certainly got a lot of shooting, especially during a week of severe frost, when it was too hard to hunt, and the cold weather drove in a lot of strange birds such as geese, great northern divers, and other sorts. We were also asked to shoot inland, near Prittlewell (I have entirely forgotten who our host was, but remember we made his acquaintance riding home from hunting), and I shall never forget that day, because someone peppered a labourer, who was crossing the line of guns and was hidden by trees. Yells were heard from beyond the belt of trees, and when we got there a burly man was rolling about on the ground, declaring he had been shot all over. Examination, however, revealed the fact that he was more frightened than hurt, and though a considerable number of pellets were found in his breeches and gaiters, none of them had penetrated the flesh, which is not to be wondered at seeing that he was practically out of range, and had only been hit by spent shot. He was well rewarded, and I saw him several times afterwards in South-end, taking a holiday, and he invariably told us that the day he was shot was the best he had ever had in his life.

Essex is, I need hardly say, a sporting county, and much of the hunting which takes place within its borders of very high character. It is, I am inclined to think, the best plough county in England, and this applies not only to the Union pack, but to the Essex, the Puckeridge in parts of their country, and the East Essex. The Essex and Suffolk I never saw, and have been so little in the country that I cannot write anything about it; but the Essex is a grand open country, much of it very thinly populated, and though there is arable land to gallop over rather than grass, much of the arable is comparatively light going, especially during the autumn months before the winter rains have come down. The Roothings are generally considered to be the best part of the hunt, and Roothing ditches are no joke if one happens to slip into one, for though they may be dry at the bottom, they are very deep, and from some of them it is impossible for a horse to scramble out, and he may have to be walked a mile or more along the ditch to some spot where the ground shelves downwards to the ditch. Of this I have had actual experience

somewhere between Takeley and Dunmow, and the funny part of it was that hounds were not running, but were merely going quietly from covert to covert. It must have been in the spring, for there was a field of standing corn, and the riders, in single file, all went round by the headland—which was a very narrow one. Suddenly a horse ridden by a lady began to plunge, and, catching my horse on the quarters, the latter gradually slipped down into a deep, dry ditch. I never even came off, nor did the horse lose his legs, but we were at the tail of the procession, and there was no one near who knew the run of that particular ditch. The upshot was that I rode up and down this ditch, and others which joined it, for three-quarters of an hour before I found myself on level ground again, and when I emerged not a sign of the hunt was visible and I did not find hounds for another hour. But horses, after a little experience, jump these Roothing ditches freely, and many have a firm take off and landing, though there is often a short growth of twigs on either bank above the ditch. I only saw the Essex very occasionally in 1897 and the following year, and always on the eastern, generally north-eastern side of their country, but I frequently was with the Puckeridge when they were at coverts mutual to the two hunts and when they ran into the Essex country.

Curiously enough I did not see the Puckeridge country until many years after I had wanted to hunt in it. I knew it was principally plough, but I had read, many years ago, a short account in (I think) one of "The Druid's" books of how Mr. Nicholas Parry had run a fox from the centre of his country to Sandy in Bedfordshire, and I felt that where such a run was possible the country could not be a bad one. After that I used to study it carefully from the train window during many journeys between London and Newmarket, for I may explain that the Great Eastern Railway enters the Puckeridge country after crossing the river Lea, a mile or two north of Broxbourne, and goes right up its eastern side to Great Chesterford, beyond which the line enters the Cambridgeshire country. What I particularly noticed was that the whole district seemed to be remarkably open, and that as far as one could judge from the window of a railway train the enclosures were large, and mostly arable, but with a

certain amount of grass, especially in the valley of the river Stort. The upshot was that I rode through a considerable part of the country on a bicycle one summer, and after a time took an old farmhouse, which was not far from the centre of the hunt. From these quarters I had two-thirds of one season and a portion of the next, but I went to the north for the latter part of each season, and I am not going to say that I did not prefer the north from a riding point of view, grass being always pleasanter to hunt over than plough. But for all that Puckeridge is a great hunt, happy under the mastership of one of the best Masters in the kingdom, who has made a big name for himself as a hound breeder, and who has had for many years a very grand pack. Mr. Barclay's hounds are workers, and Peterborough hounds to boot, and they show rare sport over what is, except in very wet weather, generally admitted to be a poor scenting country; and here, I may state, scenting conditions vary just as much in a plough country as they do where the land is chiefly grass. How to understand this one does not know; I think it is either the foxes which vary or the atmosphere, but I do not know which, and I can only say that I have seen the Puckeridge run hard all day, and have heard afterwards that the Essex a few miles away could do nothing. I have also heard of the reverse side of the case, when the Essex had good hunts and the Puckeridge could not run a yard. But, as I dare say many of my readers know, there are at various times all sorts of conditions which govern scent, and very little evidence as to their why and wherefore. For example, I remember one long hunt in the north only five or six years ago, which lasted some three hours, when scent was never really good. Hounds kept driving on, at no great pace, and always on grass. At one period of the hunt, after they had been going for quite an hour, they reached a long, narrow strip of ploughed land, and though they had only just been able to own the line in the preceding grass field, they shot away the moment they touched the plough, and fairly raced to the end of the field. Beyond they were on grass again, and they quickly slowed down, and a quarter of an hour later the same thing occurred when a second ploughed field was crossed.

Probably about five-sixths of the Puckeridge country is

arable land, and therefore it follows that the greater part of the riding is on what is broadly termed "plough." But as a matter of fact there are considerable variations, and perhaps the chief of these is that during the autumn there is a very great area of stubble in the hunting areas. It is, of course, impossible in an arable country for farmers to plough out all their stubble fields immediately they have been reaped; the process is in many places a long one, extending over the greater part of the autumn, and therefore it happens that during October, and sometimes well into November, there are stubbles to be crossed which, if not too hard, afford excellent going. I have known the stubbles as hard as iron in September, and yielding and pleasant a little later, but the Puckeridge country carries its best scent when the country is really wet, and even then the plough is nothing like so heavy as I have found it in other countries. This applies also to the western and north-western side of the Essex country, and I am inclined to think that when the land is dry scent is better on the eastern side of the Puckeridge than it is on the west or in the most northerly districts of the hunt. But, as has been suggested, sport is best in this particular country when the land is very wet, and at such times there is greater continuity of good sport; but I have seen the Puckeridge run in all sorts of weather, and once saw a brilliant twenty minutes, followed by a good hunting run on a holding scent when the dust was flying in the centre of the fields. The best day with the pack which I saw was after a meet near the centre of the hunt. Where exactly this meet was I do not remember, but hounds found in a little spinney quite close to the kennels, which were then at Braughing. They ran on steadily to the Hassiobury Coverts, and thence to Hazel End Wood, where—as I believe was thought at the time—they changed foxes. Anyhow, they went on in an eastward direction, crossing the main Cambridge railway near Birchanger. They then ran north of Takeley Forest—but not into it, if my memory is correct—and, still bending a little to the north, reached the coverts of Easton Park. Here they came right round, and went back on a parallel line to Hassiobury, and how the hunt ended I do not quite remember, as one horse had had enough and



I was obliged to stop. A glance at the map will show that an extraordinary amount of ground was covered in this hunt, and a very long point made to the turn near Easton. Many other good hunts I saw with this pack, but at times the sport was quite spoilt by the mange epidemic which was then raging in Herts and Essex, and which caused such mortality among the foxes that sound, travelling members of the tribe were not easily found. Fields with the Puckeridge were large in those days, especially in the Bishop's Stortford district, where there is more population than in other parts of the hunt. The Saturday country in the extreme north-west is very thinly populated, and somewhat remote from any centre of population. Still, even there there used to be a fair muster, for Saturday is a popular hunting day with business men, and many used to travel long distances when hounds met at such places as Barkway or Reed. And in this neighbourhood hounds were apt to run into the Cambridgeshire country; and I well remember one December evening when they finished about four miles north of Royston, and I had to ride home a distance of twenty-two miles in extraordinary darkness. I got some gruel for my horse at Royston, but there was no one of the few who had stayed to the end going my way, and as it was too dark to attempt any short cuts by the fields I had to stick to the lanes, and my tired horse kept blundering against the hedges. Near the south-east of the Puckeridge Hunt lies Takeley Forest, a huge woodland, which is neutral to the Puckeridge and Essex. But this particular forest is in many places very open, with "squares" of railed-off covert and open grass between. Both packs are often there, and a finer cubhunting ground could hardly be found, for cubs dodge across from one square to the next repeatedly, and are much more frequently seen by the field than in a dense woodland where the rides are still thick with summer growth. In Takeley Forest I have seen Baily, the late Essex huntsman, to great advantage on a hot morning, and watched him hunt cub after cub in scientific and satisfactory fashion. I have also seen the Puckeridge, later in the season, hunt foxes which would not leave the forest, and for woodland hunting alone, I think, Takeley Forest is the best hunting ground I ever knew. There is another very

oig covert, named Scales Park, in the northern part of the Puckeridge country, and I always liked the look of this place; but foxes were scarce there in those days of mange, and I never saw any good sport from it. By training to Great Chesterford I saw both the Newmarket and Thurlow and the Cambridgeshire an odd time or two, but with the former pack there was then a scarcity of foxes, which made a long draw almost inevitable. With the Cambridgeshire—Mr. George Evans was the Master then—I was more lucky, and remember one nice day of short but very pretty hunts. What chiefly struck me in the Puckeridge country—and I suppose the position is much the same now—was the cordiality which existed between the farmers and the hunt. I hardly like to mention names, because it is five and twenty years since I saw the Puckeridge in the field, and I am afraid I have forgotten the names of some whose faces I can remember. But the Messrs. Sworder—very regular attendants at Peterborough—Mr. Frank Stacey, and Mr. Martin Burls occur to me, and these and others whose names I am not sure about form a considerable backbone of what I have always thought may claim to be one of the greatest hunts in the kingdom. The influence of those I have mentioned was great, their knowledge of hunting and their keenness intense, and they worked hand in glove with the covert owners and shooting tenants—which latter body are always numerous in every country within fifty miles of London. In fact, the farmers of the Puckeridge help to maintain the traditions of a great hunt which has been in existence nearly 200 years, and which during that long period has profited especially through the efforts of three particular Masters. The first of these was Mr. Sampson Hanbury, Master from 1801 to 1832; the second Mr. Nicholas Parry, Master from 1838 to 1872, and the third the present Master, who is now in his twenty-seventh season. Mr. Hanbury was chiefly responsible for settling the hunt and its boundaries on the present lines; Mr. Parry showed great sport, and more than maintained the standard which Mr. Hanbury's mastership had accomplished; and Mr. Barclay—and since 1910 his son, Major Maurice Barclay, who is joint Master of the pack with his father—have brought the hunt to a pitch of perfection which says a great deal not only

for the management of the establishment, but for the holding together of a large country.

In a letter which has reached me from an old friend there is the following: "Do give us one or two of some days on Exmoor." I had, before receiving this letter, almost forgotten that I had ever seen the famous west country pack of staghounds to which my correspondent refers, and truth to tell, I have not at the moment a great deal to say about the Devon and Somerset, for I have seen just enough of the pack to make me long for more. As a matter of fact, I had only paid two visits to the pack, and quite recently a third, which will be mentioned in a supplementary chapter. The first was during Mr. Fenwick Bisset's Mastership, in the year following the Franco-German war, which was 1871. And my recollections of the trip are too confused for any definite description, though I remember being in one all-day hunt, when the stag was apparently lost, and refound again three or four times, and was finally taken quite close to Exford. But more recently I enjoyed a week that was very full of sport in the west, and to one day I can refer at length, for I was lucky enough to be present at a hunt of four hours, to which several pages were devoted in Mr. Everard's *Stag Hunting with the Devon and Somerset*, and by this account I can fix the date of my visit to red deer land as having taken place in 1900. I had been staying at Scarborough, and I well remember how, on the Saturday before the Doncaster meeting, I saw, what were then, Sir Everard Cayley's hounds cub-hunting, not very far from their kennels at Snainton. With a friend I left the Grand Hotel (Scarborough) not long after five o'clock in the morning, and had a ten mile ride to cover. A fine amateur huntsman, Mr. Robin Hill, carried the horn, and after a lot of hunting in small coverts, hounds went away with an old fox, and had a capital forty minutes in the open, with a kill at the end. They then returned to cub-hunting, and I remember that it was an awfully hot morning, but that the run took place about seven o'clock, before the sun had asserted himself. There was a long ride home after refreshing at the Master's house, but the upshot of that ride was that the Master of the Braes of Derwent, who was with me, and who could not begin his own

cub-hunting on account of a late harvest, was fired with the idea of a few days in Devon, and we instantly wrote for rooms and horses for a week later, and were lucky enough to secure both, though September was then in its first week. Meantime, we saw Diamond Jubilee win the St. Leger, and Lucknow supplement the Royal victory in the Portland Plate, and then, on the Saturday, we travelled all day, and reached Minehead in the evening. There we stayed for the night, but on the following day we went on to the Anchor, at Porlock Weir, where we had secured rooms and horses. Mr. Pike Nott provided the latter, and we called at his stables, and quickly discovered that the staghounds were either not hunting or were too far away on the following day. We had, however, asked for horses for every day in the week, and so we on the following morning went to a meet of the Exmoor foxhounds, at some spot about halfway between Porlock and Lynmouth. The meet was at eleven, and there was no question of cub-hunting, and, as a matter of fact, there was a very large field, composed chiefly of stag-hunting visitors. What is more to the point is that we had a good deal of pretty hunting, and obtained a fair idea of what that particular part of the country was like.

Where the staghounds met on the following day I do not remember, but the Deer Park was the first draw, and when tufters were put into quite a small spinney, three or four stags at once showed themselves, and all appeared to be great, noble fellows. The tufters were stopped and hounds brought from Tom's Hill, and laid on. Then came a pretty but not a great hunt. We went to Chalk Water, Weir Water, and to the Combes, near Porlock. Then we went west again, and were at County Gate and beyond, but fresh stags kept intervening and there was no kill. It was a busy day, in which hounds were never idle for some five hours, and once we were going hard on the open moor for some five and twenty minutes, but a great deal of the day was spent in covert. On the third day we saw the Minehead Harriers, whose present Master, Mr. L. E. Bligh, was then in his second season. They were in the cliff country, between Hurlstone Point and Porlock, and were kept going all day by hares, which were able to evade them in very strong gorse. It was terribly hot, and

though scent had been fair with the staghounds on the previous day, it was miserable on this occasion. The fourth day was with the staghounds again, the meet being at Comers Gate. And now we saw a fresh method of proceeding, for a stag had been harboured in a very small and rough piece of ground on the open moor, and the whole pack was taken straight to the place. The stag went away at once up a steep incline, with the pack almost at his heels, but he quickly put a gap between himself and his pursuers, and afterwards provided a fine hunt. Where he went at first I do not recollect, but he was a long time on open ground, and then descended to the Barle Valley. I remember that he had hounds all round him near Marsh bridge, but he broke away again and went down the fields, past Dulverton, and was taken very near the junction of the rivers Barle and Exe. This was a capital hunt of about three hours, and what impressed me most about it was that once when the pack were running through deep heather, with the stag apparently a good way ahead, the first whipper-in suddenly appeared with some half-dozen couples of hounds, which had followed another scent an hour before, and threw them in at head, the result being an immediate quickening up in the pace. It was a trying day for horses, and of the large field that had been present at the meet I do not think more than a fifth survived to the end of the hunt. I have a very clear recollection of that day, and also of my ride home from about three miles south of Dulverton to Porlock Weir. How far it may be I do not exactly know, but with a tired horse it took me many hours, though I gave him meal and water and a feed of corn at Dulverton, and a second drink at Exford. Anyhow, of our particular party I was the only survivor, and the others who did not see the finish, owing to their horses being beaten, were lucky enough to secure a trap at Exford and leave their horses to come on later—or on the following day.

Whether we saw the Harriers or the Exmoor Foxhounds again on the Friday I cannot remember. I know we hunted with one of the two packs I have named, but I have no recollection of the sport, and may pass on to the Saturday, when the staghounds met at Slowley, near Dunster, and an hour



was spent on Croydon Hill watching the tufters in the Combes below. I shall now quote from Mr. Everard, for the country was new to me, though even now I can recall almost every yard of the hunt and the principal places we passed. Mr. Everard wrote: "The run took place on Saturday, 15th September, 1900, with a galloping three-year-old deer from Parson's Close plantation, near Luxborough . . . . There being no alternative deer harboured, the pack was brought from Kingsborough, and at ten minutes to one o'clock, a matter of fifty minutes after the deer had broken covert (the interval having been occupied by trying back for a heavier deer), hounds were let go on the fields adjoining Treeborough Common. . . . After various short checks on ground foiled by sheep, they carried the line to the Raleigh's Cross-road and the heathy commons on the Withiel side. While hounds were hunting the line the stag was viewed some distance ahead, sinking by Swinhayes Corner to the Comberow woods that overhang Leigh Barton." I cannot give Mr. Everard's description of the next part of the run, as it is long, and part of it deals with the difficulties of hunting a stag round the deep combes and ravines of this particular neighbourhood, but he describes how hounds hunted through various deep ravines and up the steep incline of the mineral railway until they came to the commons at the head of Sticklepath Hill, where there was a check. After pretty hunting the pack swung to the higher end of Colton Pits, and then went on to the head of Elworthy Combe. The deer had rested in the ravine, but was viewed as he sprang up, and now the pace quickened up to a rattling gallop, hounds following their quarry through Combe Sydenham, and thence to Nettlecombe, where there was a terrible up and down business for the field. In a stream near Nettlecombe Court the stag took a bath "but found hounds too close to him, and sped away over the roughly fenced enclosures towards Washford. . . . Another mile from field to field brought them to the Williton road, where their deer had been viewed only a few short minutes ahead. On, over the level tillage ground, until a short turn gave them pause for a few minutes near a small covert, called, I believe, Furse Close. Into this covert they presently carried the line, and there was a rousing fresh find. On before them sped the

deer, still able to bound lightly over the banks and trim fences of the valley, but unable to maintain the pace for long. Swinging round in a ring to the corner of Furse Close, he came to a final standstill in a small hurdled enclosure in a deserted lane. Here Mr. John Clatworthy, of Exton, jumped off his horse and took him single-handed before the leading hounds could reach him. Time from the lay on four hours, and from the fresh find at Elworthy Barrows, one hour and five minutes, this latter part particularly fast, and over a stiff and difficult country."

Never was there a more truthful or graphic description written of a run than this. I can, if I close my eyes, see the stag taken, and I had noticed Mr. Clatworthy several times during the hunt, he being conspicuous because of the rope he carried over his shoulder. It was a great hunt, and the latter part of it a scurry over a flattish, strongly fenced country. We were little more than a mile from the sea at Watchett when the end came, and no doubt the sea was the stag's point. As well as I remember, some fifteen to twenty of a very big field saw the end, and Mr. Priestman and I—hardened by five consecutive days of hunting—were two of them. Getting back to Porlock Weir was now the question, and we rode slowly to Dunster, arriving there to find the hotel crowded with hunting folk who had dropped out in various parts of the run. It was out of the question to ride our tired horses any further, but when I had hired a waggonette and horses it took me nearly an hour to find a man to drive them, as it was Saturday, and the men had finished work for the week. I succeeded at last, however, and was then besieged for a lift by others whose horses were done. At length we got away, the wagonette laden to its fullest capacity, and sat down to dinner at the Anchor at ten o'clock. This day stands out among the best half-dozen of my life.

Mention of my brief experiences with the Devon and Somerset Staghounds reminds me that it is hunting rather than riding which (before the war) brought probably the greater number of the visitors to that country in August of every year. There were, I need hardly say, hunting-men from all parts of the kingdom among the riding crowds on Exmoor, many Masters of hounds, and—as a matter of course in these

days—many ladies; but the love of hunting, rather than of galloping and jumping, was, I think, the principal attraction, and I am inclined to think that interest in hound work is more general than it was a generation or more ago. Those who follow the Devon and Somerset come in for much tricky riding, both on the moor and up and down the combes, and occasionally there is not a fence to be jumped all day long, while, except at odd times, the greater part of the galloping is over heather. But there are fine opportunities for watching hound work, when once a run begins. The tufting, as far as my experience goes, is mostly out of sight—but not of hearing—of the field, but when once the pack has been laid on there is plenty, as a rule, to be seen, especially for the well-mounted ones, for hounds do not travel so fast over the heather as they do over grass. This interest in hound work has, I think, been largely promoted by the puppy show. Time was when puppy shows were by no means general, and I can remember various countries in which there was no such thing before the 'eighties, while I have it also in mind that many of the earlier shows were insignificant affairs to which no one went, except a few of the walkers. I recollect one modest affair at which some eight or nine couple were brought in on the same day, many of them led by the children of the walker. Then the Master and his huntsman looked them over, and afterwards sent two or three small prizes to those who had sent in the *best conditioned*—not actually the best puppies. This sort of thing did not last long, and the puppy show gradually developed until it became the important function it is to-day, attended by large crowds, not only of walkers, but of members of the hunt, of farmers, and, in many cases, of ladies, with an elaborate luncheon, many speeches, and well-known judges, often brought from quite another part of the country. Such competitions are of great value to any hunt, and it is satisfactory that now the war being at an end they are being resumed in all their old importance. They bring together the hunting people and the people whose land is ridden over in the midst of the season; they bring about an increase in the number of willing walkers, and they encourage hunting people — and especially the youngsters — to take an interest in the hounds themselves. And when

once this interest is aroused it generally continues, for those who have really noted the best puppies at any particular show are often anxious to pick them out when they begin to work in the field, and to follow their performances. Only a few weeks ago I was talking to a veteran huntsman, who retired some years ago, and he told me that when he first became a whipper-in he was sure that no one except the Master knew the names of any of the hounds, and that no one ever asked him anything about any particular hound. "But," he added, "before I retired I was being constantly asked, 'what was that dark-coloured hound in front?' or 'which hound was it that took it up in the road?' And I believe that in my last place there were quite half a dozen men, and one or two ladies, who knew every hound in the pack." This is all to the good for the future of hunting, but I do not wish my readers to form the idea that because I am keen on hound work and am no longer young I cannot appreciate the galloping and jumping. What I may point out is that the two go hand in hand, and that it is quite possible to ride really close up to hounds, and note what the pack are doing, just as the huntsman does. What I think is that the pleasure which can be derived from a run is enormously increased if the doings of particular hounds are being taken in at the same time. A clever huntsman, or Master, and nowadays even an ordinary non-official follower will know, whenever he sees the pack, which hounds are leading, which are not running up, and so forth, and he will also be able to detect the notes of the various hounds in covert. And those who are able to do this must appreciate a fine hunt better than those who merely follow some pilot and, possibly, never see a hound from the start to the finish of a run.

But I did not intend to lecture my readers when I began to write to-day, but rather to continue my narrative, which is fast drawing to an end. I have a letter from an officer who is at present in Egypt, and who reminds me of a good day with the Wirral Harriers, in Cheshire. I well remember the occasion, but first I may say that within quite recent times I have seen the Cheshire foxhounds in the field, and enjoyed myself very thoroughly in watching a pack that was new to me. But as the three days I have in mind were mostly



spent in the Forest (Delamere Forest), I need hardly say that I did not see the best of the country. On one occasion hounds were in the open to begin with, quite in the corner of the country which lies nearest to the Dee estuary, and they had a pretty hunt of half an hour, to ground in some rocks near the Frodsham Golf Links. Afterwards they went to the forest, but it was a day of good scent, and foxes came away into the open, and almost invariably went back to the forest after ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. On another occasion I was with hounds in the forest all day long when scent was bad, the ground being very dry. It was at the end of the season, and I never saw so many foxes close together at that particular time of year, but hounds were terribly handicapped, and kept changing from one to another. I think on one or two of these days the proportion of women to men was the largest I ever saw in any hunt, and I was much struck with the fine quality of some of the horses. It was no easy matter to see what hounds were doing at times, but I saw two huntsmen at work—on different days—Short, and Walter Wilson, which latter was first whipper-in, but carried the horn on one of the days. Short I had seen before in Essex, and found he was as capable a huntsman as he had been whipper-in fifteen years before. Wilson had, I thought, a wonderful voice in covert. My visits to the Wirral Harriers were during the Mastership of Capt. Ker, between 1895 and 1899, but I cannot fix the date. What I do remember is that one of them was, from a riding and not from a hunting point of view, one of the most extraordinary days I ever had with hounds, and that I saw some of the greatest thrusting it has ever been my lot to witness. As a matter of course, hares jerked about, and there was never any point, but we were in a grass country of small enclosures and very strongly fenced, with always one, sometimes two, ditches to each fence. There did not appear to be any particular reason why a number of these big fences should be jumped. Often there was no hurry, and a gate was handy, but there was a strong riding contingent of eight or ten, including one or two ladies, among the large field, and whenever the big fences appeared they went straight at them, and either got over or through, or came to grief. The Master, a very big man, and his very



big huntsman, rode in remarkably bruising fashion, but in their case it was often sheer weight that got them through a big fence. There was a man—a light weight—on a chesnut pinto pony, who particularly distinguished himself, jumping one or two high and very awkward stiles in particular, but the pony he rode was a marvel and did all he was asked. Though it is more than twenty years ago, I can remember quite half a dozen exceptional jumps I saw taken that day, and I can recall how Capt. Ker remarked that all the big jumping seemed rather a waste of energy which would have been better distributed with the foxhounds. The Wirral Harriers have the Wirral peninsula between the rivers Mersey and Dee for their country, for the Cheshire do not go into that particular district, which is mostly dairyland, and from what I have seen in late years now much built over. It was of Wirral, I believe, that the French hunting enthusiast said: "What a lovely country, all ze ditches on ze ozerside."

And *à propos* hare hunting in the north-west, I once saw a good deal of fun with a pack of beagles in Anglesey, which were maintained by Henry, fourth Marquis of Anglesey, who had been Master of the South Staffordshire from 1865 to 1872. Lord Anglesey was an all-round sportsman who, besides hunting with harriers and foxhounds, kept a strong kennel of greyhounds, and was the patron of the very successful Lichfield Coursing Meetings, held over the Beaudesert estate. In the year 1889 (I think) I was at one of these meetings, and Lord Anglesey asked me to go on to Plas Newydd to see his beagles, and (incidentally) some coursing at Bangor. I had two days with the beagles on the island, in a very hilly grass country, where the fields were divided by high stone walls. As far as the hunting went it was much as with other beagle packs, but the pack was as smart a one as could be got together at that day, and the Master would have been a tremendous find for Surtees had the author of Jorrocks been living at the time. There was nothing peculiar about his way of hunting hounds—indeed, most of the job was left to the kennel huntsman—but his costume I shall never forget. His short jacket of brightest green was adorned with a scarlet collar; he had a black velvet cap of his own design, but of less than half the weight of an ordinary hunting cap, and he wore white

kid gloves with two or three rings over them. Moreover, he had a couple of scarlet-jacketed personal attendants, who each carried a neat folding ladder which, when opened, was some four or five feet high. These ladders were used for the walls, one for the ascent, the other for the descent, and without them it would not have been an easy matter for an elderly man to see anything of hounds. Still the sport did not suffer owing to the Master's eccentricities of get-up, and the hunt was remarkably popular in the island of Anglesey.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CONDITIONS OF HUNTING.

Quite a number of letters have reached me from time to time which practically ask me to include a number of subjects in these papers that have little concern with my past experiences as a follower of hounds. I cannot, for example, compare one particular country with another particular country—as I have been asked to do—because, though I know one of the two named very well indeed, my knowledge of the other is extremely superficial, owing to my having only seen it on two or three occasions, with long intervals between each visit. But to one letter, which came from the Flanders front towards the end of the war, I can reply, and am very glad to do so. The writer, after expressing a wish that the “carrying-on of the hunts” would be successful, stated that he and others who had read the series of articles would like my opinion on two points, viz.: As to the conditions of hunting; are they better or worse than when I began to hunt? And did I think that hounds had been improved, or the reverse? Both of these are subjects on which a good deal can be said, and I will begin with the hound question, and may at once say that the whole matter is one of absorbing interest, which increases from year to year, and about which there are many side lines on which there are differences of opinion. Some hold to the idea that different hounds are required for different countries, while others affirm that a good hound is at home in every sort of country. It is often said to be the case that a certain type of horse does better in a hilly country than the upstanding, nearly thoroughbred animal who is perhaps a bit on the leg, but my experience is that the better a horse is bred the more able he is to go anywhere and everywhere, and, for example, the best stayer I saw in my visit to the Devon and Somerset country, which I wrote a few pages back, was a thoroughbred named “Gated,” who had won steeplechases and had been in training for long enough. Moreover, the cleverest horse I ever rode in a country of steep hills was a thorough-

bred, by Bass Rock, who was seventeen hands high, and so high on the leg that a small pony could almost run under him. In the case of hounds, I think it may be taken as proved that really well-made ones will go anywhere, but that hounds with indifferent shoulders will fall to pieces when tired, no matter what country they are hunting in. And I must make it plain that I can only write of what may be termed orthodox foxhounds. Of the hill packs which hunt the mountain countries of Cumberland and Westmorland and of the purely Welsh hounds I shall write later, but I have seen high-class working hounds which were descended from a Welsh strain, and I have one bitch named Handmaid in mind that always ran at head, and yet who on the flags would have been almost a disgrace to any good kennel. She was long and low, with something approaching a hare foot, and quite wanting in the upright carriage which one looks for in a high-class foxhound. Yet she was a perfect demon on a fox, was always in front when hounds were running, and late in life was the mother of good stock. How exactly this bitch was bred I do not know, but she was at the North Durham kennels throughout the 'eighties, and in 1891 she bred a hound named Galopin to the Cleveland Galopin. This much the *Foxhound Stud Book* reveals, but the volume is dumb as to Handmaid's breeding.

One statement as to the difference between the modern foxhound and the hound of from thirty to forty years ago can be made with full conviction, and that is that the present-day foxhound is better looking than his predecessor. The opinion is, as a matter of course, derived from an all-round point of view, and does not concern the individual hounds of any particular period. In other words, the average pack—and more particularly the provincial pack—now makes a much better appearance on the flags than it did, say, from a quarter to half a century ago. I do not say that the best-looking hounds which come to Peterborough are actually the handsomest in the kingdom, for many good packs never send hounds to the shows. Nor do I say that there is improvement from year to year in the hounds which are shown, or that the champions of each year are better looking than the champions of a year before; but what I maintain is that the all-round

standard is higher than it was at probably half the kennels in the kingdom. There is, in point of fact, an undescribed standard of merit, which requires size, strength, quality, and good shoulders, legs, and feet, and which cannot be set out or described by any hard-and-fast rule. The possession of all these qualities—in a greater or lesser degree—combined with bold and upright carriage, makes what is called the Peterborough hound, and this combination of quality is recognised at a glance by the hound expert, but is probably a sealed book to those who have not a real eye for hounds. No doubt there have been at any time during the last hundred years many individual hounds of the very highest class, and as good in their work as they were to look at, but it is probably also the case, as far as one can judge from foxhound history, that at one time the kennels which contained the really smart packs were few and far between, and that at a majority of the more remotely placed kennels no great amount of attention was paid to breeding, and that many of the packs, no matter what their working qualities might be, were uneven as a whole, both as regards height and size and in their general appearance. It is also almost certain that a great part of the improvement has been brought about by the puppy shows in the various countries, and by the open shows at Peterborough and Reigate. I have stated how the puppy show has progressed during my experience, how from a small and unimportant function it has, in most countries, become the great summer festival of the hunt; but I was writing of it in connection with its being a source of encouragement of hound interest, and now I may add that it has undoubtedly brought about a spirit of emulation among Masters of hounds. Time was when the average country pack was seldom visited in kennel except by the members of its own particular hunt, and when the expert stranger was almost unknown. Before the war, however, a great number of Masters saw many kennels besides their own in the course of the summer, and notably there would be a regular levee at Belvoir on the day before Peterborough, and another at Milton on the same day, which was frequently the puppy show day as well. Then Masters tour about the country, judging each other's puppies, while in the actual season they see far more of other packs in the field than their fathers and grandfathers did.



All this means a broadening of ideas as to hounds, and the result which has been gradually, but firmly, established is that the sort of hound which can win at Peterborough is the sort to be aimed at by breeders, and that variations from type should be "put down." And I am inclined to think that these variations from type are far less common than they used to be, simply because the eliminating process has been in action for many years at many kennels, and this means that the odd hound of unorthodox appearance has practically disappeared. As far as I can gather, when fewer hounds were bred and Masters did not strive so determinedly to reach a certain standard, there were occasionally odd hounds or even an odd litter that was ungainly, perhaps too big and clumsy, more frequently too small, or with formation that was not correct. A Master who was a genuine hound man would condemn such hounds at once, but in other cases, where the Master was less particular, where very few puppies were bred, and there was little margin in the matter of numbers, the odd hound would be entered, and kept on if he was good in his work. Probably the average hunting man of to-day has never even seen the sort of hound I have in mind, but I can remember such hounds, and I have, within the last five-and-twenty years, seen a mixed pack, where the height ranged from barely over twenty to well above five-and-twenty inches, where flat sides and bad legs and feet were conspicuous, and where a little "dressing" was badly needed. I mention no names or locality, but the pack I have in mind is now up to show form, thanks to a capable Master, who changed the kennel system, and went to his neighbours for blood. But what my correspondent in Flanders wanted also to know is whether I thought the Peterborough show has done good, and to this I answer most certainly it has, if only because it has improved the all-round standard all over the country, and encouraged the using by one kennel of hounds from other kennels which may be hundreds of miles away. A Master in need of fresh blood goes to Peterborough and sees just the hound or kennel type that he is looking for, and straightway sends his bitches to the kennel he approves. One Master wishes to correct rather heavy shoulders, another wants more bone, or greater size in his hounds, while a third has hounds which are deficient in quality. Peterborough acts as an ex-

change in the foxhound world, and is widely welcomed on that account. There is, as a matter of course, the fact that the judges are different from year to year, and that sometimes judges have a slightly different idea as to the relative merits of hounds. A majority now go for the massive, heavy type, while some others are all for quality, and not such sticklers for bone and size. But as all recognise that certain conditions, such as straightness of limb, must be acknowledged, it follows that there are not many real differences of opinion. One judge likes a heavy hound, the other a lighter one, but if there should be one of each type in a competition, and the good, heavy dog is a better hound than the light one, or *vice versa*, it is good odds that the better hound, no matter of which type he is, will get the verdict. If the two judges do not agree there is always a mass of expert knowledge round the ring from which a referee is instantly forthcoming.

The question of heavy or rather lighter hounds does not affect the question as to whether hounds have improved, but it is an important matter, and though some may prefer the 24in. hound, of beautiful quality and endowed with great elegance, to the more weighty hound an inch higher, the fact remains that a fair standard of height cannot be maintained in any kennel unless the big hounds are used. In other words, there must be big bitches to breed the big hounds, and so maintain the size, and big bitches cannot as a rule be bred unless they are sired by big dog hounds. There are exceptions, and a huntsman told me not long ago that the smallest bitch at his kennel was the dam of the two biggest bitches and of the biggest dog hound in the pack; but he added that she came of a big strain, though she herself was so wanting in size. To me it always appears that when there is great size clumsiness is apt to creep in; but the massive 25in. hound is probably the most perfect dog in the world, and if one frequently sees more quality in hounds which are not so big, this hardly applies to bitches, some of the very big ones being brimful of quality, and with bone which is quite in keeping with their size. Bone in bitches is nothing like so pronounced as it is in dog hounds, and this is another reason why hounds with really big bone should be used at the stud. In some kennels I have seen bitches that were really beautiful

as to neck and shoulders, and with quite remarkable quality, but every one of them light of bone, and I have seen good-looking dog hounds bred from similar bitches that were also very deficient in bone. If constitution and stamina are to be achieved, there must be pronounced bone in the modern foxhound, and in my opinion—formed by taking note of the sire and dam of any particular hound which appeared to be well off or badly off for bone—bone is even more important than height. Yet Belvoir Gambler was only 23½ in. in height.

It is not an easy matter to decide exactly what are meant by the “conditions” of hunting, and I am not quite clear what it is that my correspondent means, but I think I can give some idea of the changes which have taken place since I began to hunt, and from these he can form his own opinion. First, then, the greatest change which has occurred with regard to the physical condition of nearly every country in the kingdom is the advent of barbed wire. This horrible—as regards hunting—invention had not been discovered when I began to hunt, and did not appear for many years afterwards, while when it first appeared its growth was very gradual indeed, and in many countries it was unknown long after it had become common near big centres of population. Now it is to be found everywhere, and though it has been regularly taken down at the beginning of the season and replaced in the spring in a great number of districts, the fact remains that there are other districts in great numbers where the wire is permanent, and certain to remain so. The taking down process is being continued, but I heard only a week or two ago of new wire being put up, fixed to old railway sleepers, placed as posts, and where there was so little of the old fence left that it looked, as my informant remarked, “as if it was intended to be a permanent job.” This was in one of the most important midland countries, and hardly augurs well for the future.

What is quite certain is that from a riding point of view the country is nothing like so good as it was when wire was unknown. Just think what it meant, viz., that a horse could be ridden at any sort of fence with the knowledge that if he failed to get over, his failure was due either to the jump being beyond his powers or to his making a mistake in jumping. One rode

with more confidence in the pre-wire days, and well do I remember the consternation which the advent of barbed wire caused. Luckily, the first strands put up, when I became acquainted with the evil, were new, very bright, and easily seen, but the particular line of wire I have in mind was half a mile long, forming one boundary of a farm, and it remains there to this day. This particular wire was, I have always understood, put up by a non-resident landlord who had promised new boundary fences to a fresh tenant of a somewhat neglected farm, but the new wire cut the usual line of hounds between two small coverts, not more than a mile apart, and ever since the "field" has had to use the gates, which involves a considerable detour. Indeed, I can go further than this, for I know of places which are permanently closed to riders owing to wire, and which, when hounds follow a fox through them, compel the huntsman and all riders to go about half a mile round. This is what is known as a "birdcage," and doubtless there are in these days numbers of other "birdcages" in various parts of the country. Personally, I can without much trouble think of at least a dozen accidents due to wire, and I have seen hounds badly torn by it on several occasions. Once, indeed, I saw a southern pack with a fox close in front of them charge a fence formed of four strands of barbed wire with a plain double wire on the top, and at least half a dozen couples were badly torn. I have seen, too, more than once, a single strand of wire about a foot above the ground, and four feet or so out from a thick fence, and entirely hidden from the view of those on the far side. One such place I have in mind, and as soon as it was known of—early in the cubbing system—a man was sent there with a couple of danger posts. These he put up far too low in the fence, and the first time hounds crossed the field two horses jumped into the wire, one of them being very badly cut. I do not think these traps are very common, and I have heard of more than one which was removed when the holder of the land came to know what had taken place; but they are one of the conditions of present-day hunting, and must therefore be mentioned.

And anyhow, the broad fact remains that wire is enormously used, both as new fencing and to mend gaps in old fences, and that although in pre-war days a great deal of this was taken



down during the hunting season, this is not the case everywhere, and though a hard-riding field may ride up to hounds over miles of country, they may at any time be thrown out owing to wire, while hounds go straight on. In the poorer hunts far less wire is removed than in the richer establishments, and how often during an ordinary season does one read that "the huntsman could not get to hounds owing to wire," or that "the field was compelled to make a detour because of such and such a farm being heavily wired." To sum up this part of the subject, wire has interfered with the average huntsman's duties, has curtailed the pleasure of riding to hounds, and has increased the danger to all who follow hounds from field to field. There are in these days many arrangements whereby the wire trouble is in some degree met. The danger signal, if placed high enough in the fence, so that it is visible a long way off, prevents many a follower from going at the tempting-looking fence which conceals the treacherous cord. Then, too, there is the "invitation" jump, often a bushed hurdle, as in the North Staffordshire country, at other times a low, strongly-built stone wall, as in the Tynedale country. But the invitation jump is not always an unmixed blessing, for it often involves leaving the line of hounds for a time, and where the field is really large the ground sometimes becomes terribly poached and greasy. The fence, though easily jumpable, is often very strongly built, and I have myself seen several falls at invitation jumps, which were due to horses slipping as they took off. The low stone wall one finds in parts of the north of England must be cleared, and is a very simple jump, but if a horse hits it he is rather likely to fall for it does not give way like a hurdle. It is generally to be found where the actual fence of the field is a stone wall of five feet high and upwards, and with a strand of wire or a sheep-rail on the top, while the made jump is some two feet lower, and has frequently a top of loose gorse bushes, which, if they have not removed on a hunting day, can be pulled out by the handle of a hunting-crop. It will be seen then that all sorts of dodges have been resorted to in order to minimise the wire trouble, and perhaps the simplest of all is the hunting wicket, which, if a well-made one, perhaps suits the average farmer better than the invitation jump. But I have seen many hunting-



wickets which were too narrow, and others that were badly hung, others again which swung back after each horse had passed through, and yet again others which were so heavy that it was almost impossible to hold them open in a high wind. It would seem to be a simple thing to make hunting-wickets of fair width and which opened and shut readily, but there have, I think, been more failures over this class of wire antidote than an ordinary man would think possible, and I believe that the man who patented a really good wicket and did not charge too much for it would sell a great number.

Wire is, as I have said, the greatest change which the country, judged from a hunting standpoint, has known in my time, and I am inclined to think that the increase in the size of many fields is another of the great changes. I cannot, as a matter of course, speak of the numbers which were seen with a whole host of packs before the war, and I actually know of certain packs which have a smaller following than they had fifty years ago; but where this has occurred there have been reasons for the decline, and in one country which I know well, the smaller fields are principally due to the fact that a very large area of the original country has been given up, owing to the increase of industrialism, and that the hunting residents in that part of the country have gone further afield for their sport. There are, no doubt, many who greatly dislike hunting in, or even near, an industrial district, or in a country that savours of suburbanism, or is full of thickly-populated villages. I very much dislike those conditions myself, and greatly prefer a semi-wild country, in which hounds can work out a line with little chance of their fox being headed, and where those who follow hounds have the country to themselves. This may be a selfish view, but my feeling is that a crowd at a meet is desirable, as also are foot-followers of the real sporting sort, who follow hounds because they really appreciate what is going on; but for the real business of hunting great crowds of people on foot are terribly in the way, though I can think of exceptional occasions, such as when a certain covert is drawn on certain New Year's Day meets, in which, when hounds were put in, there would be groups of pedestrians at all the cross-rides, and literally thousands on the high ground above the covert. This was near to, but not exactly in, a colliery

district, and the miners who formed the crowd were such a sporting lot that their presence was welcomed and appreciated.

But it is the riding following which has caused changes by its increased size, and more than half of this increase is to be found in the fact that there are five-and-twenty ladies hunting for every one there was forty years ago. In this direction the increase has been literally enormous, and it is not too much to say that in some countries the softer sex numbers quite as strongly as the male followers of the pack. This means that fields have doubled in size, here, there, and almost everywhere, but as a matter of fact some fields have been more than doubled because there has been a steady increase in the number of male followers to be added to the lady increase. The upshot of it all is that hounds are frequently too much pressed, especially in the early portion of the day, and very often neither hounds nor huntsman have fair play. All foxes do not leave the same amount of smell behind them, and all land does not carry the same scent, while undoubtedly there is great variation of the scent-yielding properties of each particular fox, and the weather conditions of the moment. A fox will break covert in view of a large and resolute field, and if riders can be restrained until hounds are out of covert—which cannot always be done—they will, as soon as hounds are on, break away in a huge mass, and if scent happens to be poor and the pace bad, be on to the top of the pack almost immediately. Then the huntsman often hurries on the pack, and two-thirds of the field, not knowing whether hounds are actually running or not, will hustle after them, driving them well over the line, hindering the huntsman in his work, and doing the hounds an infinity of harm. This is one of the difficulties which the bigger fields have brought about, and that it is encountered very frequently in various parts of the country admits of no dispute. On the other hand, there are quite a number of Masters of hounds who have succeeded in coping with it, and who, in point of fact, will not allow over-riding to take place. Such men are the saviours of modern hunting, and where they are in office sport is uniformly better than where over-riding is not properly kept in check. And here I may state my opinion that the office of Master of hounds exacts much more care and attention and involves much more trouble than it did a couple of generations ago.

Some years ago Masters of hounds were perhaps more easily found than they were, say, in the decade immediately preceding the war. What will happen in the future when countries become vacant it is impossible to say, but it is the case that the Masters who were in office during the summer of 1914 held on to their duties with wonderful accord. Quite a considerable number of those who went back to or joined the forces still continued their mastership, appointing a deputy—very often their wives—to carry on in their absence. Indeed, one and all showed extraordinary spirit in the matter of carrying on, and it may be the case that there will in many countries be less of the “pomp and circumstance” of the hunt, and therefore a decrease in expenditure. This, however, is not my theme, for I am still trying to give some idea of the changes in the conditions of hunting which have taken place during the last two generations. I may say at the outset, then, that the travelling Master, who took a pack in a country which was not his own by birth or residence, was by no means unknown fifty years ago, and even before. Indeed, Surtees in his novels has scores of references to stranger Masters; but I am inclined to think that the number has greatly increased, and it passes through my mind that I have at the moment two friends, and both twenty years or more younger than I am, who have each had three separate and distinct countries, hundreds of miles apart, and who evidently love mastership, and all its triumphs and troubles.

Time was when, except in some of the Shire countries, the Masters of the provincial packs were, in nine cases out of ten, local men with many and varied interests in the country which they hunted, and as a broad general rule the local Master was the right man in the right place. His knowledge of hunting and his enthusiasm were known before he was appointed, and on his side he had the advantage of knowing his followers, the landlords within his district, and generally a considerable number of the farmers. He was in a majority of cases a land and covert owner himself, and he knew where fox preservation was strict and where it was slack. He also very often knew how to strengthen the weak places in his country; but in many ways matters were much more simple for him than they have

been in later years. I can think of two Masters who in my young days were popular and successful, emphatically the right men in the right place; but their duties were practically confined to mastership in the field, and, as far as their countries were concerned, there was really nothing for them to do. One of the two I have in mind was a member of Parliament, and engaged in business as well, and over a period of several years I never remember to have seen him in the heart of his country except on a hunting day. He paid occasional visits to the kennels, no doubt; but he was too busy to give attention to the country, and, as a matter of fact, many countries in those days required no attention. The other man I am thinking of never even lived in his country, though he had rooms at a small hotel not far from one of his two kennels. He hunted three days a week, and on the other three days was at the head of a large business, and he never saw his country except in the hunting season, for he hacked home five-and-twenty miles or so after hunting, and really only kept his rooms to dine (sometimes) and change in. The fact is that the great question of fox preservation had hardly cropped up in those days, and in the countries of the two Masters I am thinking of the shooting tenant was almost unknown. All through the country there was a feeling that a vulpecide was a criminal who was without the pale, and I am much inclined to think that this feeling was the greatest asset which the hunts had, for there were always plenty of foxes everywhere, and blank days were almost unknown, and if they did occur were generally due to an overnight storm or to inefficient stopping. In certain places where foxes were too numerous litters would be moved in the spring to other parts of the country, and in these expeditions I frequently assisted. Indeed, I have mentioned how I transferred three litters of cubs from the northern to the southern part of the old "Durham County" country, and that was only one of many such undertakings, usually performed in the company of the late Mr. John Greenwell, of Broomshields, or of his cousin, the late Mr. Alan Greenwell, of Durham.

But at none of these expeditions was there any sign of a Master. We were merely asked to take a few cubs to such and such a place, and the message would come from the secretary

of the hunt and not from the Master. And even the secretary was not much about the country during the summer, and the "moves" were, as a matter of fact, decided on at the end of a season, when the bigwigs of the hunt had come to the conclusion that there was a shortage in one particular district and too many foxes in another. And here I may point out that hounds killed no more foxes in my early days than they now do. In some districts, indeed, I know for a fact that the number of kills has in recent years been far larger than it was in the 'sixties and 'seventies. But I have a very strong opinion—indeed, I am perfectly certain—that the increase in kills is in some degree due to the fact that the fox breed is nothing like so strong as it was when I began to hunt. There were before the war more foxes all over the kingdom than there were thirty or forty years before, and the best of them were, no doubt, quite as good as the best of former generations; but there has been, and may still be, a leaven of weak foxes, and in consequence a greater number are killed. On this particular subject my mind is firmly made up, and I will give my reasons for my belief. In the first place, epidemic mange—as distinguished from the mange which was occasionally found on a very old fox—was unheard of thirty years ago, but has since then penetrated into nearly every country; in the second place, shooting tenants and keepers, who were quite reckless in their attitude towards hunting, had (before the war) multiplied tenfold, and with their coming they introduced the barbarous habit of taking up cubs in the spring, keeping them in confinement all the summer, and putting them down just before hounds came to draw their coverts. I have seen in more than one country two or three couples of such cubs mopped up by a pack of hounds in an hour or two, and I must say that such a thing was impossible where I first began to understand hunting, though in that particular country cub-hunting was from a month to six weeks later than it was farther south, and often was hardly begun before October.

Some years ago, during a long conversation with a veteran ex-Master, who was following hounds on wheels, I asked why at the time I refer to the number of kills was so small compared with what it had since been in the same country. The



old gentleman was up in arms in a moment, replying that in an enormous number of the best runs the fox got to ground beyond the country that was "stopped." "In those days," he went on, "a professional earth-stopper did almost all the stopping, and, though he was at work all night, he could only travel the district nearest to where hounds were going to draw." This is very true, for I have seen a diary of hunting in that country in the late 'thirties and early 'forties of last century in which good runs, with long points, to ground were very frequent. This, however, does not apply everywhere, and most certainly not where there are "stub bred" foxes, as in some of the home and southern counties.

But to return to the Master. He has in these days heavier expenses to meet than his predecessor of a generation or two ago, a larger field to govern on hunting days, a dozen claims for poultry or other damage where there used to be one, and the always insistent question of the fox supply. For although there were more foxes than ever in the aggregate a few years ago, they were unevenly distributed, and while there were too many for sport in one hunt, they might easily be far too few in the neighbouring country. Much depended on whether the hunting or the shooting interests were strongest from a social point of view, and much also depended upon the tact and geniality of the Master. A too liberal Master, like Mr. Puffington, is bad for a country, but a really mean Master, like Sir Moses Mainchance, is literally a curse. And the happy medium is not always forthcoming; but a genial manner, and ample tact will often succeed where *largesse* will fail, and in these days a popular Master is just as essential as an unpopular Master is dangerous. The Master of a generation or two ago had a far simpler task than the Master of the present day, for not only was the price of horses much lower, but so too were forage, wages, rates, and a whole host of incidentals. I am writing, of course, of the days before the war, and taking no account of the inflated prices which the war brought about. And I do not know that the stopping was any worse in the days of the professional, for many keepers have always been too lazy, and scores of foxes are constantly missed because earths have been put to before dark in the evening or early in the morning of a

hunting day, either before the foxes have left or after they have returned in fact, and I had proof of this only two or three years ago. I was staying with a friend to see a pack that was new to me, and they drew his covert—a large oak wood with a hazel bottom—blank. My friend was much annoyed, and when he returned from hunting—we had come home early, and there was still an hour of daylight—he walked up to the earth and found it closed. He opened it, and retired some eighty yards to a coign of vantage among the hazels, and we had not been watching the earth a quarter of an hour when a fox appeared. We then left the place, and passing through the wood caught up two small boys, who, it appeared, were the children of the coachman. What were they doing in the covert my friend asked, and they told him they went that way and returned to and from school. “Do you ever see any-one in the wood?” they were asked. “Only ——,” meaning the keeper; “he was going up the path this morning as we went to school.” This was a clear case of a morning instead of an overnight stop, and the keeper heard a good deal about it, with the result that the covert was not drawn blank again that season. The professional, as far as I have known him, did his work very thoroughly, if in a somewhat limited area; but his days were numbered when the era of big shoots set in, for the average modern keeper would not even allow the earth-stopper on his ground, instead of helping him as many of the old keepers did. To me when a boy it was an unmixed delight to go the rounds with the earth-stopper, and I well remember that not only did the keeper on the estate where he began go with him and help with a series of stops, but that, somewhere about midnight we used to be joined by the keeper on the next beat. When the work was over the professional came back with me, and we spent the early hours of the morning in a warm harness room, where a long settle and a bundle of rugs for a pillow did duty instead of a bed.

Another change of some importance which has gradually been brought about in some, but by no means in all hunting countries, is the difficulty which the Master has in finding coverts in which autumn hunting is freely allowed, and where there is no question of “hounds must not come until after the first, second, or even the third shoot.” As regards this

question I confine myself to my own experience, though I have at times known of dozens of cases of which I had no personal knowledge. Indeed, I have received at the *Field Office* during a course of years many letters from Masters of hounds complaining of the difficulty in which they were placed, and I have actually known of more than one resignation of office, owing to the scarcity of coverts open to hounds in the early autumn. Whether all this will crop up again I do not know, but as the hand-reared pheasants have almost entirely disappeared it may be that the big bags which were the aim of many covert owners and shooting tenants have gone for good, and that covert shooting will be conducted on more simple lines. In my early days I had the good fortune to live in a country where game preservation did not interfere with fox hunting, and where such a thing as strained relations between hunting men and shooters were absolutely unknown. Surtees, writing on this very subject, makes Proudlock, the gamekeeper at Beldon Hall, when asked about the fox preservers in his neighbourhood, reply: "Well (hum), there are (hum) scaly people in all countries." But if there were any in the countries where I first hunted I never heard of them. And there was plenty of game preservation, with a gamekeeper on every estate, but the shooting men were, for the most part, the hunting men also, and they preserved foxes as strictly as they did their game. The several Masters of my early days took hounds exactly where they wished, and had to consult no one about their meets. Men fixed their shooting days after they had seen the list of hounds' appointments, and if it were found that there was likely to be any clashing it was the shooting day that was altered. Moreover, there was a general feeling throughout the country that the fox was a sacred animal, and once when a dead fox was found when hounds were drawing a covert the whole field was horrified, until a farm labourer appeared with the information that the carcase had been lying there since the last time hounds were in the covert, and that he had been intending to bury it, but had forgotten to do so.

Some twenty years or more after the period I have been writing about I was hunting in quite another part of the kingdom, and I quickly found that such and such a covert was closed to hounds until after a certain day in November; that

if hounds ran towards another covert before Christmas the Master was expected to stop them; and that with regard to quite a number of estates the hunting days could not be arranged until the holder of the shooting rights had been consulted. Here, too, there was great difficulty in finding suitable places for cub-hunting, and, though the hunt had a large following and the country was full of first-rate sportsmen, there were innumerable little difficulties with which the Master had to contend, and most of which were probably quite unknown to the "field." In this respect a modern Master was at a disadvantage when compared with the Master of forty or fifty years before. Another difficulty which is of comparatively recent standing is the increase of claims for compensation of various kinds. In every hunt nowadays there is a big list of poultry claims, and in addition there are claims for damage of all sorts. No doubt the damage to fences and crops is greater than it once was, owing to the increase in the size of the fields, while there are probably a dozen poultry-keepers scattered about the country for every one there used to be. In some of the smaller hunts the poultry fund is a thing of quite recent years, and it is just possible that some of the extremely provincial hunts still do without them. Indeed, less than twenty years ago a Master of our acquaintance had a claim which, when examined, was found to belong to the neighbouring hunt. He then wrote to the Master of the hunt, explaining the matter, and in reply received a letter which, after setting forth at some length that there was still a doubt as to which hunt was liable, concluded with the remark that "we pay no poultry claims." This was quite final, and when the aggrieved loser of poultry was interviewed he stated that he had sent in his claim to the hunt which he knew paid for damage, for it was no use troubling the others. On the other side of the question, it may be stated that in some hunts upwards of a thousand a year is paid for poultry damage, and that in a big majority of what I may term the average hunts the amount runs into several hundred pounds annually; and if the claims are not promptly paid it is generally the Master who is bothered and who has to ward off both written and verbal attacks. I remember once seeing hounds draw a covert alongside a lane, in which a biggish field was collected. There



was no fox, and hounds when drawn out crossed the lane a quarter of a mile from where the field were standing, and proceeded to the next covert. The route for the "field" was along an occupation road, where there was a lodge and a light gate, and to this they turned. A woman came out of the lodge, stood in front of the gate, and shouted out that no one should come through until she had been paid for her hens, which, she said, a fox had taken. There was some argument, and a shout for the secretary, who was somewhere in the crowd, but before he could settle the matter the second whipper-in came galloping up, and as the crowd opened he realised what was taking place, and, jumping the gate—not a high one—shouted in a loud voice: "My master'll give you a Christmas box, old lady." There was a roar of laughter and the woman being off her guard, someone opened the gate and everyone went through. On arrival at the covert it was evident the Master had been told what had taken place, for he at once sent the whipper-in back with a sovereign, and a promise that the full claim should be paid at once.

Perhaps there has been less change with regard to covert funds than with any other financial parts of hunting, for the covert fund is generally used for the maintenance of the gorse coverts, which are not of great shooting value, and which have been in very many cases planted by the hunt, or individual members thereof. But in addition to covert funds there are in these days many shootings which are taken by Masters of hounds, by individual members of hunts, or by syndicates of hunting men, with a view to fox preservation. I know of one hunt in which the Master and his friends have so much of the shooting taken that they are almost independent, and I know of other places in which the shooting syndicate works admirably. All this, of course, means greatly increased expenditure, both on the part of Masters and of enterprising hunting men. And in increased expenditure is to be found one of the greatest changes which has come over hunting during the last two generations. For example, the price of horses has, broadly speaking, doubled in my time, which means that the horse which could be bought for from £60 to £80 now costs from £130 to £160, and the horse obtainable fifty years ago



at the last named price is now not to be had much under £300. High, even very high prices were occasionally given in the shires nearly a hundred years ago, but in the cases which have been handed down—in the *Sporting Magazine*, in the *Druids'* works, and elsewhere—the big money was almost invariably paid for a celebrity who had already distinguished himself in the hunting fields of the Midlands. Now hundreds are asked, and paid, for young horses of no experience, which are sold chiefly on their good looks and quality, and in some cases because they have won a first or secured a minor prize in a class for four- or five-year-olds at a fairly important horse show. And as the speed of hounds has been increased the pace of horses is more important than it once was, and this is the chief reason for the rise.

What I have just written raises up a big question, and I am not absolutely sure that high-class hounds go faster on a good scent in a grass country than they did, say, two generations ago. What I do feel sure about is that the average so-called provincial pack has, thanks to the care taken in breeding and the free use of blood from the best kennels, improved its pace in no small degree. There are, it need hardly be said, days on which hounds can hardly walk after a fox, but there are others on which it is difficult for even thoroughbred horses to live with them, and I am much inclined to think that in recent years I have seen hounds beat horses more frequently than they did years ago. Indeed I feel quite certain that, from an all-round point of view, the pace of hounds has increased, and horse-dealers, having long since recognised the fact, have for some years been supplying an animal with more breeding and quality, and far higher on the leg than the hunters which did duty for the fathers and grandfathers of the present hunting generation. And I may add that the demand for these speedy, and therefore more valuable hunters, is by no means confined to the shires, or other grass countries, but to be found in all the more important provincial hunts. I remember one of the biggest dealers in the highest class of hunters telling me, some half-dozen years ago, that his best customers came from all parts of the kingdom, and he mentioned two hunts which, in his opinion, could show the best collection of horses, neither

of which was a shire country, and one was not even in the Midlands. I may add that the old-fashioned, powerfully made, short-backed and short-legged (as judged by present-day standards) hunter which could carry about sixteen stone throughout a long day, and jump every sort of fence, is hardly to be found at the present time. He, when he is found, is not fast enough for the days of burning scent, and the men who rode him have given way to a generation who require horses nearly a hand taller, with a longer reach, and greater speed—and which can only be purchased at a high figure.

We have it established then that the price of horseflesh has gone up, as well as the cost of maintenance of a country, the latter because there are more claims to pay, more to be pulled out for fox preservation, more for puppy shows, hunt horse societies, and so forth; but individual expenses for saddlery, clothes, and equipment generally have also risen in a considerable degree. Subscriptions have also risen, the minimum in many hunts now being quite as much as what the three-or-four-days-a-week man paid fifty years ago. Wages, too, are even now much higher than they were before the war, and whereas good strappers some years ago would only take on two horses in a well-regulated stable, three and a hack were often the work of a single man in earlier times. Another great change is the manner of reaching meets of hounds, for before and since the war about nine-tenths of every field reached the scene of action in motor-cars, while the odd tenth were hunting so near home that the car was a superfluity. Hunting with a motor-car to the meet, and left somewhere for the homeward journey, means seldom more than from four to five hours in the saddle, and thus hunting people generally have, in recent years, spent little more than half the time in actual riding that their forefathers did. Long rides to distant meets were the lot of scores of people before the motor came; but some hunting people drove, and a fair number used the train when convenient. Even some of the old school prefer to hack when possible, and just before the war I heard of a Warwickshire lady, whose daughter was going home in a motor, declining the offer of a lift, as she "preferred to bump home." She had nearly twenty miles to travel.

## A SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

### WAR TIME AND AFTER.

It is hardly necessary to explain how thoroughly hunting was upset by the Great War, for the fact is well within the knowledge of all hunting people. The marvellous thing about it is that the killing of foxes by hounds—much of it could hardly be called sport—was carried on through four dreary seasons, and practically nothing was heard about it except in its own immediate locality. Just at first the most noticeable thing was a falling off in the size of the fields, which took place everywhere. All soldiers, both regular and territorial, at once took their departure, and very soon all young civilians disappeared, the riding element in the country quickly joining up, so quickly indeed that some who had never served before were actually killed in France before the war was two months old. As the months progressed the fields grew smaller and smaller. Many hunting folks of both sexes decided that they would not hunt in war time. Many took on war work of various kinds, while great numbers who were well advanced in years rejoined some branch of the service which they had left nearly half a lifetime ago. “White-headed veterans and girls still in their teens form my present field,” said the master of a well-known pack when the war was little more than a year old, but worse things to hunting were still to come, viz., the conscription, which cleared off all the younger hunt servants, grooms, and gamekeepers who had not already joined up (great numbers of all these classes were already serving, but of course there were some left). Then came the destroying of half of every pack in the kingdom, the difficulty in procuring horses for the hunt servants, and the tremendous rise in prices, which caused the maintenance of a

pack of hounds or a stable to be increased by something like one hundred and fifty per cent.

During the latter part of the war, and more particularly in the season, which had just begun when the armistice was announced, hound shortage was the greatest difficulty which masters and hunt servants had to contend with. Packs which were reduced to half their former strength, and this applies most particularly to many provincial packs which had never been of great numerical strength, were severely handicapped in their attempts to kill foxes, and at several of the bigger establishments the hunting days had to be cut down, owing both to horse and to hound shortage. At many kennels very few, at others no hounds were bred for two, and in some instances, three seasons, for the simple reason that while the country was rationed in almost everything there was no food to spare, and especially no milk, for young hounds. Fortunately, hunt subscriptions were continued, not perhaps as they had been before the war, but still in sufficient quantity to allow the hunts being carried on by a greatly reduced staff. As regards the actual hunting I am inclined to think that the lack of stopping was almost the greatest difficulty it had to face. In some countries no stopping was done at all for two or three seasons, for the younger gamekeepers and watchers, who do most of the stopping nowadays, had gone to the war, and there was plenty of work for all the older men in every country parish. Day after day hounds were disappointed by the open earth or drain, and though digging was resorted to when feasible, there was no rush of spade volunteers as there is at ordinary times. And *à propos* digging of foxes, all hunting people must know that almost invariably when it is decided to dig, men and boys seem to appear quite suddenly, no matter how remote the place may be. As an example, within a fortnight of the present moment of writing I saw a well-hunted fox run to ground in a Welsh dingle late in the afternoon of a late November day, and in something like twenty minutes nine men and half a dozen farm boys had appeared, carrying spades, forks, and so forth.

Personally I saw very little hunting during the war, but I was in a fairly good position to know what was taking place in the hunting world. Briefly I may mention a few of my own

experiences, which I have little doubt were similar to those of others who attempted to find out what "carrying on" meant. When the war was five months old I stayed a few days with a Northern Master, but saw no hunting. It is true I had every intention of having a day with a neighbouring pack, and sent horses on to a meet, but my host was at that time buying horses for the Government, and he was that morning notified of certain likely gun horses at a farm which was almost on the way to the meet. We arrived early at this farm, and there met the veterinary surgeon, who had to pass or refuse the horses picked out by this buyer. They were duly trotted out, examined by the "vet.," and then we had to wait for the "cold show" and have them out again. Four out of five were duly bought and paid for, and then we set out to find hounds and covered many miles in a weary round of the local coverts, finding nothing but an odd lost hound and a boy on a pony, who was as completely lost as the hound. In the following autumn I was again in the North, and went to a meet of the North Durham, of which I had learned by card. I arrived at the village—in ordinary times the most popular meet in the hunt—at the right time, and found the whole place deserted, and it was some time before I heard that hounds had gone through a quarter of an hour before. Not a single horseman or woman was to be seen, and I rode on to the end of the village street, and there saw the hounds sheltered behind a barn. The kennel huntsman and one amateur whip were with them. I asked the K.H. if he expected anyone, but all he knew was that the Master was at the recruiting office, and all the family were away. After waiting nearly half an hour in the hope of someone turning up we went to the nearest covert and found at once, and for four solemn, silent (except for hound tongues) hours the three of us hunted foxes which had not been cub-hunted and never went more than a mile or so from the covert they lived in. It was a unique and most depressing performance, but I believe my experience was by no means singular, for I know that scores of times hunt servants were at work all day quite by themselves in various countries.

In the following year I was in the North again for a short time, but found that a field of half a dozen was about the regular thing, except on one occasion with the Tynedale, when



ladies made so bold a show that the absence of men was hardly noticeable. Of the veterans present there was no one in scarlet, but it was holiday time, and this accounted for the presence of most of the girls and all the boys who had turned out. I was at several kennels during the later war period, and in some instances the state of affairs was so remarkable that it is worth recording, if only to emphasise the wonderful recovery which enabled the hunts to get to work again after the armistice. In the Western Midlands, for example, I visited the kennels of two packs, where the number of hounds had been reduced by half, where no young hounds had been reared for a couple of seasons, and where there was only one—or possibly two—old horses with which to exercise the hounds. Moreover, there was no staff worth mentioning, and not a single young man about the place. Indeed, at either kennel an ex-hunt servant who had long retired from active work had been found to take sole charge, and as he had to do all the work of the kennel his life was a busy one. One of the two packs was not attempting to hunt; the other was out for a few hours occasionally, but neither was in a position to kill foxes, and a majority of the hounds at either kennel were well up in years. Quite lately I have seen both these packs again, and the casual observer would say that the pack was as strong and the whole turn out just as smart as it was in pre-war days. And he would be right.

Indeed the recovery was most remarkable, though in the season which immediately followed the armistice there was great hound shortage nearly everywhere, and an unusually early end to the season in many countries. As for the sport, or rather the hunting which took place during the war, there are few people beyond the Masters of hounds and the men who were employed who can say much about it. Scores of officers on leave had odd days in every country, and on one occasion I reckoned that twelve of a field, all told, of twenty were soldiers, but the regular hunting man's hunting was so irregular that he could hardly form an opinion. One day during the war I met a Master of hounds of long standing, and a man whose opinion on everything connected with hunting is very sound. Naturally I asked him what his pack were doing, and he replied that he knew very little about the matter.

The season was nearly over, and he was so greatly occupied with war work that he had only been out twice. In fact, all he was certain about was the number of foxes killed, that the pack had more than once got away from the handful of riders present, and that the greater part of the day had been spent in looking for the lost hounds. And, by the way, it is quite possible that many more foxes were killed than the attenuated staffs had any idea of, for a veteran, who preserves but does not hunt, told me one day that in a spinney on his property, on a day following a visit from the local pack, he had found the carcasses of two cubs which had been killed and left by hounds.

During the last two or three seasons I have seen more than one pack for the first time, and renewed acquaintance with others. The first place I went to was Minehead, early in 1919, nearly twenty years having elapsed since my previous visit. The Devon and Somerset were hunting hinds, and the Minehead harriers were devoting their energies entirely to foxes, having been given permission to hunt a small district, part of which belongs to the West Somerset Hunt and part to the Exmoor. The district in question includes the North Hill—from Minehead to Selworthy or thereabouts—and the Grabbist Hill from the neighbourhood of Dunster to somewhere about Wootton Courtnay. Not a big country by any means, but there are wooded combs all round Grabbist, and any number of foxes. Mr Bligh was in command, as he had been twenty years before, but in the days of my earlier visit I had only seen his pack hunt hares, whereas now foxes were their quarry. How long they had been chevyng the more noble beast I do not remember, but they had killed seven foxes before I saw them at work, and I think they killed seven more while I was at Minehead. I followed on foot, as did many others, but there was a fair field of riders as well, including several ladies who were very regular in their attendance. But for the foot followers of foxhounds I never discovered any place which is anything like so good as the Grabbist Hill. A fox seemed to be always present in whichever covert hounds drew first, and as a rule he crossed the hill soon after he was found, and ran through a covert or two on the slopes of the other side, and then recrossed the top again. This top is sound

old turf, and so narrow that the pedestrian was seldom at a disadvantage, and in one hunt fox and hounds crossed the top four times before the former was put to ground. This hunt lasted four hours, during which time hounds were seldom out of sight, and never out of hearing of those who remained at the top of the hill, and many of the foot people remained to see him got out and killed. The pack were biggish harriers, of the old-fashioned (not the foxhound) type. They have a wonderful cry, and hunt well, thanks to Mr. Bligh, who has them in perfect subjection, and who is not only an enthusiast but an expert in hunting these hill foxes. With the other foxhound packs I was unlucky; the Exmoor could not find foxes when I was with them, while the West Somerset had the knack of going away quickly, and leaving the pedestrian hopelessly in the lurch. I did, however, see them kill one fox after a long hunt, for they happened to come right back to where I was, with a beaten fox close in front, which they killed ten minutes later. The Exmoor had had, some little time before, a draft of old hounds from the Puckeridge kennel, and these, Mr. Newman told me, had helped the pack in really wonderful fashion.

During my visit to Minehead there was far more than the usual quantity of rain, and one had to be prepared for a ducking every time one went out, whether on horseback or on foot. My first visit to the staghounds was a doubtful venture, because they were advertised for Cloutsham at eleven o'clock, and rain came down in a perfect deluge almost up to that hour. Then it cleared suddenly, and I had the idea that if I went to Horner by the Porlock motor 'bus, which was on the point of starting, I might possibly fall in with hounds. With me went an hotel acquaintance, who had never seen a hunt of any sort, but was terribly keen. What happened was described at some length in an article I wrote for *Baily's Magazine* early in 1920. So I shall be brief. Leaving the 'bus at Horner footpath we walked right up the wood for an hour and a half, seeing one solitary hound who was running a line of his own, and hearing nothing beyond the roar of Horner Water, which was coming down in flood—a raging torrent of water. I had intended to walk up Eastwater—which is nearer Cloutsham—but missed the footpath, which is perhaps not to be wondered

at as I had only been in Horner Wood once before, and that many years ago. At one o'clock we arrived at Pool Farm, but hounds had not been there, and so we recrossed the head of thecombe more with a view of walking over a hill, the name of which escapes me, to Porlock and the Minehead 'bus. I had a good map in my pocket and soon found the track I wanted, and then suddenly we came round a corner, and there in front of us was the whole hunt, hounds being in a young plantation which was in a fold of the hill, and which we on higher ground could see all round. About thirty riders were drawn up; the huntsman was in the plantation on foot, and the deer was apparently well hidden for hounds never spoke. By this time I had interviewed some of the field, and discovered they had brought the hind they were hunting from Annicombe, that she had been seen to enter the young plantation, but hounds had not been able to fresh find her within.

As we watched from the higher ground the huntsman came out, mounted his horse and took the pack round to the far side, being evidently just a little suspicious that the hind might have gone on before hounds came, as the ground fell away somewhat abruptly just beyond the covert. While he was casting his hounds my companion suddenly clutched my arm, shouting: "Look, look, there's the deer in the wood." And sure enough the man who had never seen a hunt of any sort was quite right, the deer being for a moment visible, moving quickly among the young trees in the thickest part of the plantation. A countryman standing near us also saw, and hounds were quickly brought back. Once more the huntsman went in on foot, hounds fresh found their quarry, and hunted her up and down for ten minutes. Then there was a sudden silence, hounds having lost touch with the hind. The covert appeared to be about as bad scenting ground as I ever saw, but of course it was certain the hind was still there, for she could not leave without being seen. My friend and I were still standing on the higher ground well back from the covert, and once again it was the novice who saw the deer moving. Hounds were taken to the exact spot, and this time the deer broke at once, and going right through the assembled field took hounds over the moor towards Horner. I believe she was taken near Luccombe, but we on foot were too far behind to



see much more of that hunt. I noticed, however, that scent in the open was as good as it had been bad in the covert.

Probably many who go regularly to the Devon and Somerset for the autumn stag hunting have little idea as to what effect the winter climate has upon the sport when the hind is the quarry, and I may instance an experience I had a few days after the hunt which has just been mentioned. The meet was at Hawkcombe Head and I motored with two friends from Minehead. It was a beautiful morning when we started, a bright sun and dry roads all the way to Porlock, and the same state of weather prevailed until we were about a third of the way up the new road through Porlock Banks. There we noticed a change from sunshine to fog, and as we gradually reached the top of the long, winding hill we became more and more enveloped in the mist. At Hawkcombe Head it was impossible to see more than about seventy or eighty yards, but hounds were there, and very quickly a field of at least forty gathered up. By this time we were in a fine, wetting rain, and the pack were taken to Birchanger Farm, while tufters went down to Porlock Banks. Hinds were quickly found, and it was not long before one was separated and driven to the open moor just above Birchanger. Soon three couples of tufters were in pursuit, but these were lost immediately on the moor, and after a longish wait other tufters were released, and another hind sent away. Exactly the same thing happened, it being quite impossible to follow hounds on the high ground. The body of the pack were then taken to Porlock Banks, and this time they hunted a hind who stuck to the lower ground. It was all covert work, however, and about three o'clock we regained the car and began our homeward journey. As we descended the hill—by this time we were very wet—the light got better every yard, and we reached Porlock to find the same sunshine and dry roads we had left some four and a half hours before.

On another day I saw, practically, the whole of a good hind hunt from a car. The meet was at Wheddon Cross, the hind which hounds followed was found at Oakrow, came up to Cutcombe, and then sinking the hill ran by the lower slopes of Dunkerry to the lower end of Horner Wood, and on over the hill to Porlock, where she was taken in a cottage garden. By



car we came down to Timberscombe, and found a lane parallel with the line which hounds had taken, and we were often so near them that I could count the hounds as they ran "in long-drawn file" close into Luckham. They went above the village, and we only lost them for a time when they rose the hill to the west of Horner Green. Curiously enough on this occasion a second hind had come on from somewhere near Cutcombe to Horner, and this hind hounds found on their return from Porlock, and hunted it to the neighbourhood of Timberscombe, where it was taken. On this particular day the visibility—to use a new-fangled word which I do not like, but whose utility is obvious—was magnificent, a perfect panorama of the Devon and Somerset country being in evidence all day long.

From Minehead I went to Bath, where the season was drawing to a close, and saw the Duke of Beaufort's and the Avon Vale at work. At that particular time there were temporary restrictions in the Duke's country, and I saw hounds stopped twice in an hour when hunting from a Biddeston meet, when foxes were particularly numerous. I think two or three were killed that day, but there was a fine hunt in the early afternoon, and in point of fact the pack were having the good sport which seems to be their regular fare. The fields, even in their best country, were not so large as I had expected, and I found it difficult to count a hundred horses, all told. No doubt in the spring of 1920 there were nothing like so many people following hounds regularly as there had been in pre-war days, for country people were feeling the results of high taxation and the very high cost of living. I noticed this wherever I went, both in 1920, and in the following year, and though there has been perhaps some improvement in this respect since that time, I imagine it will be long enough before we ever see the very big fields which were to be found in many meets during the first decade of the present century.

With regard to fields I may state that for many years I have been in the habit of counting roughly the number of people out. I got this trick of counting owing to an argument as to the number out on a certain day, after a day's hunting, and I have continued the practice almost mechanically, just as I count hounds whenever I have a chance in the course of a

hunt. And I may mention some of these counts, which are to some extent proof that fields have fallen off. The first refers to the Puckeridge, about which I find that I counted sixty ladies following hounds one day in 1898. The next is three years later, and is to the effect that when Lord Zetlands (as they were then) were drawing a covert on Sir W. Wilson Todd's estate at Halnaby there were seventy-one scarlet coats visible, these including the hunt staff. Another count—which was by no means complete—was taken with the Cheshire on the Saturday after the Grand National, when hounds were hunting in the Forest and when one would have thought that the attraction of the last day of the Liverpool Spring Meeting would have caused the field to be small. Nevertheless, I counted 214 horses as hounds moved off from the meet, and I know I did not get them all. With the Tynedale in the spring of the present year (1921) I counted over 190 horses at a Whittington meet, but there had been a ball overnight and no doubt this increased the field. On that particular day no fewer than seven Masters of hounds were present. The biggest field I ever saw was with the Percy sometime in the 'seventies. But the then Prince of Wales was staying at Alnwick Castle, and hunting people had swarmed to the place, literally in thousands. Indeed, the local newspapers put the number of riders at 3,000, and though I think this was a very liberal estimate, I quite think that half that number was present. The biggest ordinary field I ever saw was with the Quorn during Lord Lonsdale's mastership. I do not remember where the meet was, but it was in their best country, and I have a recollection of a crowded lane of horses, kept there while hounds drew a little spinney a field away. After a suffocating ten minutes a whistle was blown, and then everyone tried to get out of the lane. There was practically no room to jump, but when I got a chance my horse pushed through the fence, and a moment later I could see galloping horses everywhere, several rather small fields being covered with horses, and not a hound visible. Indeed I followed on blindly for quite ten minutes, and then caught sight of the pack on rising ground nearly half a mile ahead. Later on that same day, about three o'clock, a field of several hundred had been reduced to something like seventy, and I saw a beautiful hunt.

But I have been running wide—skirting, in fact—and to go back to my original fox, I saw some nice sport with the Avon Vale, when hunting on foot. I was rather lucky perhaps, for on three days out of eight or nine I was able to see nearly all that hounds did, while on the other days they went away with a fox and I saw little more of them. The best hunt I saw was after a meet at Chippenham. Hounds found close to the town, and for two hours the fox zigzagged, crossing and recrossing the main road leading to Devizes. I viewed him at the start and then again when I had to wait until hounds came over the road, and after an hour and a half they reached the neighbourhood of the George Inn, Sandy Lane (a frequent meet when the Duke of Beaufort was hunting the whole country). There the fox got into a spinney in Spye Park, and the field were drawn up, so that he had plenty of room. But he would not break for long enough, and after half an hour, during which hounds had to work amidst a dense cover of blackberry bushes, he was so beaten that he was caught before he had gone 200 yards. I have a pad of that fox, because having viewed him twice and seen him killed I felt that I had a vested interest in him.

On another day when hounds met at the Rocks I had several ladies from the hotel in Bath with me. We went by tram to Batheaston, walked up to the Rocks and saw about a couple of hours of pretty hunting in the combes of that neighbourhood. There were several foxes running about, and towards two o'clock one left the district with the greater part of the pack in pursuit. But some four couples were left, hunting another fox, and with these hounds we had a great time. They could not travel at any pace, but kept hunting steadily, and were often close to their fox. Indeed we viewed him more than once, not far in front, and were anticipating a kill, when he slipped into a rabbit hole and our sport was over. The Duke's, as everyone knows, are a very grand pack of big hounds, who combine quality with massive substance and immense bone, and if the Avon Vale are not quite so big they are also a fine pack, and have some beautiful bitches. Some of these were sent to Peterborough that year, but they were far too fat, so fat indeed that they excited ridicule rather than admiration, for their good points were entirely hidden by fat.

Some time during March of that year (1920) I went to judge at the puppy show of Major David Davies' hounds at Llandinam, in Montgomeryshire, and for the first time saw a pack, about three parts Welsh in blood, in the field. I had seen these hounds in kennel on a previous visit, and had seen the veterans of the pack hunting otters, but this was my first chance of seeing the foxhound pack. The day after I arrived the meet was at Welshpool, some twenty miles from the kennel. Hounds were sent on by motor-van, horses by the Cambrian Railway, and we motored to the meet. Some thirty riders formed the field, and hounds were taken to a hanging wood some two miles from the town. They quickly found a fox, and after some ringing work went away, the line for two or three miles being parallel with a branch of the Shropshire Union Canal. I had a first-rate opportunity of seeing the pack at work, because, for a time, they came to my side of a stream, Major Davies and the field being held up by the stream—which was at the bottom of a thick dingle—and, I think, by wire. I was much impressed by the manner in which hounds cast themselves, and worked for the line on a very moderate scent, but after about ten minutes hounds recrossed the dingle and I was thrown out.

I shall have more to say about the working abilities of Major Davies' hounds later on, but here I may mention that Llandinam is a veritable home of sport, and that hunting holds the first place in its Master's affections. Major Davies is, in fact, as great an enthusiast as I ever met, and at the moment he is not only hunting his own large country, but is joint Master with Mr. Roger Plowden of the United, Master of the Hawkstone Otter Hounds, and the owner of the Montgomeryshire Beagles, which are managed by a committee of the Montgomeryshire Recreation Society, but are kennelled at Plas Dinam, where also are the kennels of the foxhound pack and the otter hounds. As many of my readers are aware, Major Davies is also a member of Parliament, and this means that when the House is sitting his sport is much curtailed. He leaves town, as a rule, late on Friday evening, and travels by a fast train to Shrewsbury, whence he motors the forty odd miles to his home. On Saturdays he carries the horn, both with foxhounds in winter and otter hounds in summer,

and he takes high rank among amateur huntsmen of the present day, for he has very great knowledge of the sport, and knows all that it is possible to know about every hound in his pack. He has, too, a fine eye for country, and for viewing a fox, and he is quick to make up his mind; indeed, he invariably shows sport when he is hunting hounds, and he is always with them. In covert—and some of his coverts are the thickest I ever saw—he is a wonderful worker, never hesitating to go in on foot when it is too thick—sometimes it is impossible—to go in on horseback, and having a really marvellous knack of sending his horse to meet him at the right place.

The country is a huge one in area, and if one adds the United country to his own domain it means that Major Davies is attending to a district which extends from Craven Arms in Shropshire to the eastern slopes of Plynlimmon, some sixty miles at least. In such a large district, as will be readily understood, there is every sort of country which is in any degree possible for foxhunting, and it is a frequent occurrence for Major Davies' own pack to meet at Old Hall on a Monday and in the Welshpool district on a Wednesday, the countries which hounds go into from either meet being not far short of forty miles apart. Perhaps from a riding point of view the country in the Severn Valley between Newtown and Welshpool is the best. There is a good deal of wire, but otherwise this district is a highly cultivated vale with many undulations, but hounds frequently hunt all day long without reaching the mountains. Higher up the valley, west of Llandinam, the vale land is narrow and the mountains close at hand, and west of the old borough of Llanidloes there are good coverts on the hill sides, but nearly all the hunting takes place among the mountains, and it is really wonderful how the field, which hereabouts consists chiefly of hill farmers, keep in constant touch with hounds. As for Major Davies,\* and his wonderful kennel huntsman, Jack Davies, they know every inch of the ground and ride horses which are

---

\* Since this was written Major (now Colonel) Davies has given up his Mastership of the United pack, leaving Mr. Roger Plowden to carry on the hunt single-handed.



almost thoroughbred. They never seem to lose hounds for a moment, and I take it they carry a plan in their heads of all the bogs and the exact placings of the gates in the wire fences, for were it otherwise they could not keep in touch as they do, and be able to tell one afterwards which hounds were leading at any particular point, which hit the line off at a check, and which actually caught the fox. The stranger going among the mountains must follow the Master, the kennel huntsman, or a farmer who is taking a line of his own, but he must never lose touch with his pilot, or he may find himself in difficulties. If, however, he sticks to someone who really knows he will find that most of his galloping is over fine old turf, and very seldom on heather. He will have steep ascents and descents, but all are practicable, for the paths wind up and down the sides of the hills, and are used all day and every day by the farmers looking after their sheep.

And here I must interpose two reflections which this mountain hunting suggests. The first is that for the hills no horse is so good as a thoroughbred, and the second is that Major Davies' cross-bred Welsh and English hounds can hunt a fox over sheep foiled ground in a manner that I never saw achieved by any pack of English hounds. As regards the thoroughbred I do not mean a racehorse, nor a very young horse, but the stamp which, no matter how his early life may have been spent, has, in the course of time, become a steady hunter. Such horses have more endurance than commoner-bred animals, and are extremely surefooted. They do not as a rule get nervous when a storm comes on, and their smooth, easy action is an enormous asset to the rider. If an actual stud-book horse is not available, one with a great deal of breeding and many of the qualities of a thoroughbred is to be preferred, and about the best and surest footed I ever rode in the mountain country was a shapely fifteen-three horse by a thoroughbred out of a Dartmoor pony. The cobs and ponies which the farmers ride do wonderfully well in the high country, and as long as hounds do not really race they can carry their riders well up with the pack. These little horses have for the most part been bred on the hills, and have been ridden all over them ever since they were first saddled. They are therefore not only active but exceedingly trustworthy, and it is said that they have

intuitive knowledge of a bog, and will never go near one. But they have not sufficient pace if hounds really run fast, and this sometimes happens on the mountains, for the turf is good scenting ground, and foxes seem to prefer to run where they are not impeded. They often lie in the heather patches, but they seem to avoid this same heather when running before hounds. As for the sheep, they are everywhere in the mountain country, and great flocks of them will charge right over the fox's line when hounds are running, stand for a moment, and charge back again to the ground they came from. Yet hounds will run on over the foiled ground, almost as if no sheep had been there, and on a day of really good scent I saw the pack go right through a flock of moving sheep without faltering or decreasing their pace. The fact is that this particular pack of hounds are constantly among sheep. They are exercised among them in the summer, and they can hardly go hunting even on the lower ground of the Vale without meeting them in every third or fourth field. "From what I can see of the country," said the London chauffeur who presides over the Broneirion cars, "the chief products of Wales are chapels, public-houses, and sheep," and though "you might not think it there are actually more sheep than pubs."

As for sport with Major Davies' hounds, I have seen some excellent hunts in various parts of the country. The first good run was in the Welshpool district, and hounds ran for nearly three hours, covering a huge extent of country before their fox got to ground. In this hunt two points of five miles apiece were made, and the country was all ordinary agricultural land, with any number of fences to be jumped. The next really good hunt I saw lasted even longer, hounds being hard at it for four hours and twenty minutes. Their fox was found close to kennels, and hounds travelled along the base of a steep hill for several miles, swung round and came back on a lower parallel line. They then went down to the Severn Valley, but after a time turned back to the hills and repeated their earlier performance. And all this time they were travelling on at a steady, holding pace, with hardly a check of any moment. They had been running for three hours when they left the hills for the last time, but the best part of the hunt was to follow,

for after going down the valley for a quarter of an hour they turned up again, and following the banks of the river Severn they hunted on steadily for another hour, finally killing their fox in the open close to Dolwen Station, on the Cambrian Railway. The latter part of the hunt was most exciting, for the fox was constantly viewed close in front, but hounds were going down wind, and probably the sinking fox had a failing scent. This was a great fox and a great hunt, and in the last hour a five-mile point was made. Many of Major Davies' pack are very light-coloured hounds and the value of this colour on the sides of the hills is most pronounced, while the dark hounds are not only difficult to see, but when some distance away almost impossible to distinguish by sight. And in this hunt the pack were hardly lost sight of for a moment, for they only ran through one or two little spinnies, and while they were on the sides of the Moliart hills the field were able to keep close with them—a couple of hundred feet or so below—on a good bridle path.

Two other great hunts I was lucky enough to see something of with these hounds in November of 1921. The first was a moorland hunt from the hanging covert at Old Hall, and hounds made a nine-mile point and killed their fox in the open near the pass on the road which leads from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth at the end of three hours. This run was referred to in the *Field* shortly after it took place, and so was the great hunt which took place ten days later. The hunt last mentioned was, I think, the longest I ever took part in, for it began at half-past ten, and did not finish until hounds were stopped in almost black darkness some time between half-past five and six. The fox was found, lying out on Tan-y-Raalt Hill, but practically all the hunting was in the lower country, and quite the best part of it was over a fine riding line of pasture land in the Trannon Valley. In the early part of the day two points of four and one of five miles were made, and hounds went so fast at first that they got well in front. They came back to the Tan-y-Raalt Hill, however, after having been four miles away from it, and then making a further five mile point put their fox to ground on Dolgwineth Farm, about half-past two, this being perhaps the best part of the hunt, as hounds though never faltering were not going quite so fast, and the

country was the best of the day. There was a delay of something like half an hour before the fox was bolted, and this was really the only respite from hard going between half-past ten and half-past five, and though this latter part of the hunt was slower than the early part hounds were always driving on, and when stopped they were many miles from where the fox had bolted, the fox having worked right back to the Severn Valley, some three to four miles west of the kennels, whereas the hunt had begun some five or six miles north of the kennels on the Machynlleth road. The wheel on the ordnance map made out a hunt of 28 miles, but, as I need hardly write, the wheel allows nothing for twists and turns, nor for contours, and I know that I am well within the mark when I write that hounds covered five-and-thirty miles in the course of the hunt. Moreover, the fox eschewed the hills, which were never far off, and kept in the lower ground all day, going round or half round the base of several steep places without attempting to go up. During this long hunt Major Davies and "Jack" were always with hounds, and David Turner, first whipper-in, stuck to it right to the end. Of course second horses were used, but every nag was done to a turn, and they would hardly have lasted as they did had not the going been in perfect order, neither hard nor deep, but with just the right amount of spring in it.

Since an account of the hunt appeared, in the *Field* on Dec. 17, 1921, I have been several times asked if I think Welsh hounds are better than English hounds, and so I may state that I am strongly of opinion that for all the ordinary English hunting countries little or no fault can be found with the orthodox English sort, but that Welsh—or cross-bred Welsh and English—are much better in the hill countries, and I prefer the cross-bred to the pure Welsh, though on this particular point my opinion is not worth much, for I have never seen a pack of purely Welsh hounds in the field, and, as a matter of fact, I do not think there are any packs of purely Welsh blood in existence. There may be one or two, but it is a general opinion—so far as I can judge—throughout Wales that when Dr. David gave up the Glog hounds the last really Welsh pack was disbanded. Much of Dr. David's blood is at present in the kennel of Mr. Rees,



who lives near Senny Bridge, in the Usk Valley, some ten to twelve miles west of Brecon, just off the main road from Brecon to the Swansea district. I have seen Mr Rees' hounds in kennel, and his best, which have a strong family likeness, are hare-pied in colour, very rough, and not more than twenty-two inches. Their feet are spread, but they have plenty of bone, and many of them are straight. Indeed, they are most business-like to look at. They had run a fox to death in half an hour without a check the day before I saw them, and I have heard great accounts of their working abilities.

Concerning Welsh and English hounds and their chief characteristics, not as regards formation, but from a hunting point of view, it may briefly be said that as a broad rule English hounds have more drive than Welsh, and are less inclined to linger on a scent. Welsh hounds, on the other hand, have more cry, a much deeper note, and I am inclined to think, more nose on a cold scent. That is as far as I can go, and we must not forget that in a variety of English countries the modern foxhound is greatly handicapped by artificial manures, by closely shorn stubbles, and most of all by over-riding and the pushing of many somewhat undisciplined fields. This results in hounds being lifted and cast forward so often as to make them appear lacking in nose, but my experience is that if English hounds are left alone and allowed sufficient time they will generally find the line of their fox. Unfortunately, it is a far too frequent habit in many countries to give up a hunted fox after a cast or two has failed, and go and look for another, and this is in a great measure due to the fact that the average English country is at the present moment remarkably well stocked with foxes. Harriers and beagles have as good noses as they had when I was a boy, but foxhounds often have to hunt in somewhat unnatural fashion, being snatched up when working for the line, and too frequently stopped when running because certain coverts must not be disturbed and so forth.

Major Davies has introduced a good deal of "Fell" blood from Cumberland and Westmorland into his pack, chiefly with a view to obtaining the white or almost white which is so good to see on the mountains, but he has many cross-bred Welsh and English hounds, and two three-season brothers, Rouser and Rattler, by the Glog Driller, have the deepest foxhound



note I ever heard. He has, too, a wonderful almost white second-season hound named Boaster, who is by Colonel Curre's Bloater from Frantic, by the Tivyside Finder. This Boaster was first prize dog hound in his year, and has been in the prize list at the Knighton show, but his feet do not please all judges, and he was last year a trifle wide at his elbows. Otherwise he is a big-boned, upstanding almost white hound, and a perfect glutton for work. In December, 1920, when he had just been entered, I saw him draw out fifty yards ahead on the line of a fox, and Major Davies wrote me a few weeks ago as follows: "Boaster is a marvel. I think he is the best working dog hound I have ever bred. He drives along like a lion, and has the best note, marks and bays at an earth, is never idle, and has a wonderful nose. Plenty of substance and good constitution. What more do you want? Hang the feet and elbows, he can shove along."

That is a pretty good certificate of merit from a Master huntsman who knows exactly what every hound in his pack is doing, and who can value their work to a fraction. I may add that Boaster was used early in life at the home kennel, and that there are already promising litters by him at the kennels.



Webster Family Library of Veterinary Medicine  
Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at  
Tufts University  
200 Westboro Road  
North Grafton, MA 01536



